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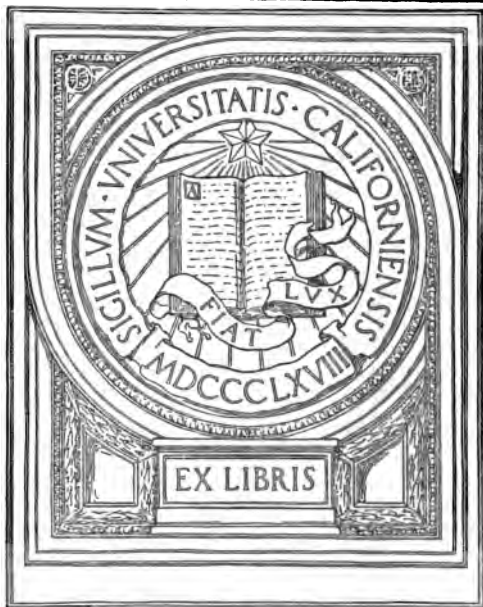
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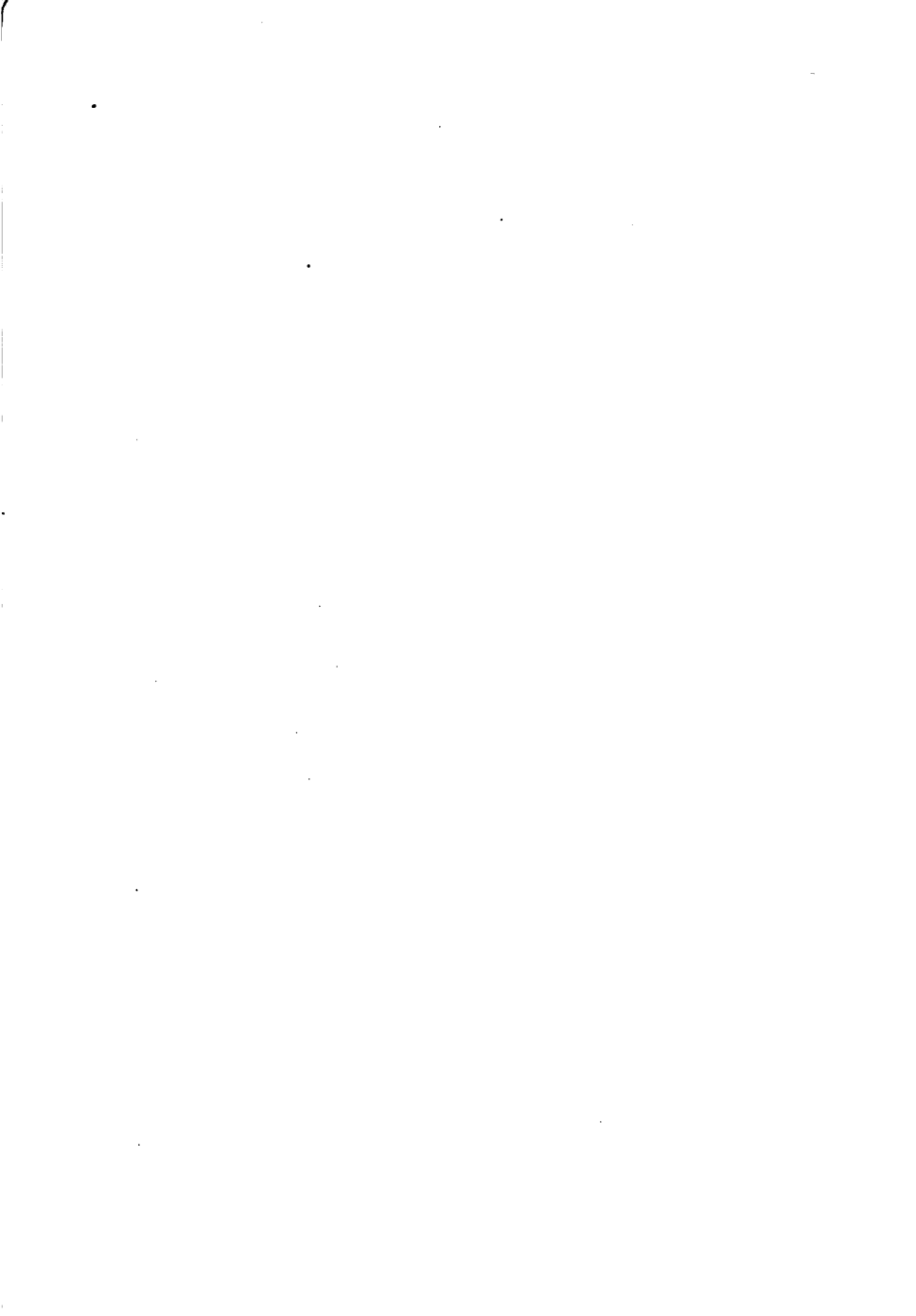
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IN MEMORIAM



JESSICA PEIXOTTO
1864-1941

Francis B. Puyall
May 1911.



**ADVENTURES OF A
NICE YOUNG MAN**

ADVENTURES OF A NICE YOUNG MAN

A NOVEL

BY
AIX, *found.*

IL Y A QUARANTE ANS QUE JE N'ÉTOIS PAS

La Bruyère



THE
DUFFIELD & COMPANY

NEW YORK
DUFFIELD & COMPANY
1908

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*IN MEMORIAM
JESSICA PEIXOTTO*

TO VIVID
ANALOG

THE PREMIER PRESS
NEW YORK
GIFT

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**ADVENTURES OF A
NICE YOUNG MAN**

ADVENTURES OF A NICE YOUNG MAN

CHAPTER I

BIRTHPLACE AND BOYHOOD

I WAS born in a village, which I shall not name, but which is not very far from the banks of the Hudson. My family was an old one on both sides and I inherited the inclinations, though not the estates, of a gentleman. My mother's people had a great deal of pride with no money to maintain it, while my father's had a great deal of money without the sense to keep it, a situation which enabled each to claim some advantage over the other, besides furnishing to their taunts in frequent quarrels the sting of truth. My mother was able to boast that she came of a military line that had a right to look down upon people who had never been in the business of killing, nor had any of her family, until probably in the present instance, ever married beneath them; a practice quite true, to my own knowledge, for when one of her uncles fell in love with a poor girl he was of too honourable a family to marry her and consequently, as a gentleman, could only seduce her.

4. A NICE YOUNG MAN

However, all these bickerings came to an end at last, for one night the good woman was seized with a painful disorder which carried her off in a day or two, leaving us no other consolation than that the best physicians within a hundred miles were paid to see her die, and that she was interred in the cemetery in which only our best bred people were buried. Nor was her death untimely, for by that time my father having come, as the saying is, to the end of his string, a hard old age would have been her lot. I was then just past twenty-one, with my head full of Seneca and Molière and Horace and Milton, besides much that constitutes the glory of Florence. You may imagine how far all these sweet bards would help me earn a living in the United States, where every boy learns the pursuit of gain and the principles of honourably taking something away from others before he is given long trousers.

With this disadvantage of literature I had the endowment of a comely person to such a degree that when I could avoid the compliments of wives I had the good will of husbands, for men admire beauty in their own sex almost as they do in women, and there is no gainsaying, even in business, the fortune of a face. However, I was the most impractical young fellow in the world, thrown into it, as I now was, to scheme for dinner while eating breakfast.

Upon my mother's death my father informed me there remained the barest competence for himself, that my further education was out of the question, long maintained already at a sacrifice for the sake of my mother. I must now betake myself to Albany, where he could afford me no better beginning than a letter to

his only brother, from whom he had long been estranged, and who, in fact, detested all of us. With the letter in my pocket I remained about a month at home, very luckily indeed, for the poor man himself, falling ill, lingered no more than a few weeks, when he, too, departed this life, having consumed almost every penny he had accumulated.

"Charles, my son," said he on his death-bed, "don't make money your god, but don't, like me, despise it altogether. Try to please your uncle. To whom but you should that man, without wife or child, leave his large estate?"

I left home with only fifty dollars, but with two comedies nearly finished, a tragedy begun, and a novel well arranged in my mind, hastening to Albany, where I felt sure of some temporary assistance from a relative so rich as I knew my uncle to be.

I now entered life with a fine opinion of myself, versed enough in books to be pedantic, so ignorant of the world as to be credulous, vain of my person but inexperienced with women, virtuous because little tempted, and honest because never tried. I had just begun to exercise myself in worldly pursuits, having done some service as a reporter for the country newspaper, having made a few speeches at town meetings, and having attempted some part in local politics. I had not the slightest doubt that I was exceedingly bright.

Before quitting this part of my life, let me say a few words concerning the scenes of my youth. In the house and its few grassy acres my father had only a life estate, the reversion being in my uncle, who so little needed it, but the place was made as beautiful as

if it were never to pass from our family. The hardy vines of the North climbed over, as if they would protect, the old and pretty dwelling. Beds of flowers enlivened the lawn without unduly encroaching on the small expanse of green, and it seemed as if every bird in the neighbouring fields and woods loved this beyond any other spot. Here, in the sultry days of summer, the shade was refreshed by a faithful breeze, which I would daily enjoy with my books beneath a great elm at drowsy noon. How shall I describe those happy days, the view of that noble river which no commerce can degrade, the mossy bank which the silent water was nibbling away?—*mordet aqua taciturnus amnis*.

It was a scene of study and day-dreams. By particular fortune I had about me all those years not only the scholarship of my father and the use of his respectable library, but the erudition of a simple old pedant, an Episcopal clergyman, whose whole soul was in the study of the classics. These he explored with industry more than German, accounting no triumph greater than inventing a plausible hypothesis concerning an obscure reading or pointing out what Casaubon had misunderstood. Infinite are my obligations to his knowledge. When at length it was plain he must lose his pupil, the good old man was sorely grieved, and when I took leave of him to seek my fortune in the world he lovingly embraced me, assuring me I was certain to do well in New York with so much Latin and Greek.

"In all my experience, Charles," said he, "I never knew a mind so exquisitely adapted to the dative case."

CHAPTER II

THE GOOD RICH MAN

HAVING arrived in Albany, I lost no time in finding my uncle, who received me with decent cordiality. He even invited me to remain a week or two. Already a trifle worldly, I sought to do better still, nor is it improbable I might have succeeded if from the beginning I had not had the ill will of his housekeeper, who clearly possessed great influence over him. This hard-faced jade, Maria Dole by name, had expectations of her own, for she was younger than he and as cunning as the devil himself.

"People think your uncle mighty rich, don't they?" she inquired.

"I don't know," I replied, "except that my father told me as much."

"Well," she concluded, drily, "there's a lot of exaggeration and miscalculation about other people's money, you know, I suppose."

To be brief, this lady held, as the saying is, a full hand against me. All she wanted was an opportunity to injure me, which, as ill luck would have it, I soon gave her by listening one day to the complaint of one of the maids. This lass had been suffering from the improper advances of my uncle (an abominable libertine), and had incurred the jealousy of Maria, both of

which conditions caused her to make ready to quit the house. The detestable Dole, though, would not pay her for the broken month, so the poor girl, with tears, whimpered to me the story of double injustice.

"It's too bad, Kitty," said I, "and here's five dollars from me; so dry up your tears."

This did no harm until Kitty in departing exhibited her gratitude to me by flinging in Maria's face what I had done, letting her see, besides, that she had betrayed my uncle's behaviour, too. The result was that the latter heard of what was called my interference, which, agreeably to his own character, was laid to another motive on my part.

My uncle's favour abated, his looks grew colder, and my welcome expired. Not without disappointment did I see myself forced to leave him, for his house abounded in luxury and was maintained, though he had no relatives, on the scale on which he had kept it before the death of his wife a few years past. In age he was beyond sixty, besides marked with dissipation.

Inexperienced though I was, I soon perceived that the old fellow was anxious to be rid of me, so I determined to do what I could with two letters of introduction which he gave me to acquaintances in New York: one a retired ironmonger named Sinclair, well known for his wealth and philanthropy; the other a rich man of leisure, then in Europe. When I expressed to my uncle a hope that Sinclair could in some way provide employment for me, the old sinner said there could be no doubt about it. Indeed, Sinclair, with his reputation for that sort of thing, could do no less in my instance, and, in fact, it was clearly the man's duty to take care of me.

Sinclair, who had been out of town when I arrived, returned in a fortnight from the annual convention of the Methodist Episcopal Church, to which his many noted charities were confined. His great house was a rendezvous for eminent churchmen, his fortune supplying funds for handsome chapels at home as well as luxuries for missionaries abroad.

No sooner was I apprised of this good man's return than I addressed him a letter, setting forth my studies as well as my readiness to serve him in any way that would furnish a decent livelihood, besides which I enclosed the note of introduction from my uncle. Getting no reply, I was not the least discouraged, since it was plain such bounty must have more on its hands than one man could dispatch.

I accordingly determined one evening when I was sure he was at home to seek him personally, and, without the slightest doubt of my getting what I wanted, I employed the time as I walked to his house, like another Scheherazade, in anticipating the fancy he would conceive for me, the great use I should be to him, my speedy appointment as private secretary, my success in winning the hand of his daughter, and the fortitude with which I should resist the advances of his young second wife. I should be very stern towards this creature. His daughter I would accept, but the step-mother would have to repine at my fidelity to her husband. There would even come a time when she would insist upon my embraces—but now I had arrived before the great man's house.

Ascending a handsome flight of steps, I rang the bell and was met by a servant, who, seeing me well dressed and able to present a card, accepted my story

that I had business with the ironmonger and admitted me. It was then half-past eight, so I was surprised to find I should have to await the conclusion of dinner, which kept me an hour of anxious suspense, with no better employment than to see on the ceilings the sprawling gods of foreign art and to recall the couplet of Pope. The repast finally breaking up, I could hear the guests, bishops all of them, quitting the dining-room, well fed and happy.

"Sir," exclaimed one of them, "we expected no more than your hospitality to-night. This munificent donation has taken our breath away."

"Of course, no mention of this little thing in the newspapers to-morrow," responded the host.

"There you are too modest," cried another, "even to the point of doing injustice to the cause. It does not occur to your generous nature that the notoriety of one hundred thousand thus given to the cause of Christ will encourage others."

"I fear it is so," responded the good merchant, "and that I should submit to this thing for that reason. You will see that it is reported unostentatiously, perhaps?"

"It shall be my first task, dear brother," responded the one addressed, "even before I have thanked the Lord for it this night. Your bounty almost overwhelms us."

Cheered by this happy example of what I was after myself, I rejoiced at hearing them at length disperse with something apparently left behind for me. Being then led into the manufacturer's presence, and feeling that the companion of learned prelates would think the better of me for a classical reference or two, I said, after introducing myself:

"Sir, you see in me one who has already realised the truth of Johnson's line: 'Slow rises worth by poverty oppressed.'"

"I don't understand you," he replied, suspiciously. "What do you want?"

Still not discouraged, I went on: "I have come here encouraged by the fame of your bounty to seek——"

"Upon my word!" interrupted the good man. "Do the people of this town think me made of money? I am worn out with charity."

"I beg your pardon, sir," I rejoined, "I do not come here as an object of charity."

"Well, one would think so from your waking people at this time of night," he retorted—a response made all the more humiliating by his daughter's coming into the room at that very moment. "However," he quickly resumed, with a change of manner on seeing the girl, "I shall see you again perhaps about this, for it is always a pleasure, I assure you, to consider the petitions of those in need. Have you any relatives?"

"That is a matter of little consequence now," I answered with some coolness, "but fortunately I have a number of relatives."

"Oh, then," he exclaimed, "my duty is plain. I must not interfere. This is their duty, and they will not be pleased to have others relieve them of it. You have a bright eye, my boy, and are going to do well in this great country of ours, if you will at all times bear in mind a Christian spirit. I am glad you came to see me. I am also glad you have relatives. You look like

! a young man who has relatives, thank God! Good evening, my boy, good evening."

With this benediction I betook myself to the door, then down the steps to the street, feeling indeed like a young man who had relatives.

CHAPTER III

THE BEAUTIFUL LADY

THE shame of this reception so upset my mind that during half an hour I could only walk the streets, without thought of returning to my lodgings. While I was thus wandering, an accident befell me too important to be omitted here, for it deeply affected my entire life.

I was turning into Fifth Avenue from one of the streets that cross it when, of a sudden, the place being poorly lighted, I was almost under the wheels of a carriage approaching at a lively speed. With no small agility I contrived in part to escape, but not wholly, for, in spite of my efforts, I was struck by one of the horses, knocked down, and stepped upon. In an instant the team was halted and the coachman, holding the excited horses as best he could, sprang from his seat to assist me, for I was too much stunned by the blow to get up immediately. While he was setting me on my legs, the coach door was flung open and two ladies sprang out in great alarm, begging the coachman to see to it that I was not killed, and reminding him that they had often warned him to be more careful. By this time I was up again, yet so befuddled as not to know which way to turn, whereupon one of the ladies, herself taking me by the arm, insisted that I

get into the carriage to escape the crowd. Being still quite dazed, I did as she wished, beginning in this way an acquaintance that was to cause me so much happiness and so much pain that I know not to-day whether I ought to rejoice in or curse the accident that brought it about.

In the carriage I received kind expressions from the ladies, who did not hesitate to soil their gloves, besides, in brushing the mud from my clothes, a kindness of which at first I took little notice in vexatious reflections that, having been kicked out of doors by the rich, I was also trodden under the heels of their horses. However, the sweetness of the women soon had its effect in restoring my spirits.

"Ladies," I said, "I beg you will give yourselves no uneasiness. I'm none the worse for this little bump."

"How charming and brave of you to say so," responded the elder, "but don't flatter yourself that we think so, too. To be knocked down by a team of horses is no laughing matter, is it, Lisette?"

"Ah, my God! no. Heavens! no, indeed," replied the other, apparently a maid. "No, Miss Lillian."

"We men," I continued, gallantly, "think little of these things, you know."

"And we women," replied the first speaker, "think a great deal. If that fool horse had lifted his foot over you again, I should have fainted."

This style of talk, with much concern, continuing for some moments, I at length, with many thanks, desired my fair friends to trouble themselves no more, but to let me out at the next corner. This request, though, met with a pretty volley of reproaches. I should not be permitted to leave them until they had taken me

to their apartments and put my dress in order, after which the coachman should drive me home as a punishment to himself, though it took him the night to do so, and while I was remonstrating about all this we arrived before their door. I was then required to follow them, for they would hear to no refusal, into a very tall building, in which, after flying towards heaven for some seconds, we were finally let into the lady's rooms. I shall be old indeed when I forget that scene, for until that moment I had not been able in the shadows to see her features. The electric light set everything in a blaze.

With trifling curiosity I turned to see who she was. She looked at me, and I was pleased. She smiled, and I felt a strange emotion. She spoke, and I was a lover.

For a moment I could say nothing, so lost was I in an admiration which I did not attempt to conceal. Not displeased with so plain an effect of her charms, the lady let me indulge my eyes a moment, and then bade me sit down, the maid meanwhile removing her mistress' robe and outward trifles of costume, and a boy in livery appearing with liquors and small refreshments. With these we proceeded to regale ourselves, conversing meanwhile, the two of us, in a lively strain. It was so soon midnight that I should never have thought of it had not a yawn gotten control of my fair hostess' face, whereupon I hastily arose to terminate an interview in which, though I did not perceive it until afterwards, the discreet beauty had learned everything about me, and I nothing whatever about her. Encouraged by the great interest she appeared to take in me, I was too eager to tell of myself, but I had no reason to doubt a second interview.

"I beg your pardon for so long a stay, Miss Evan-son," I said, "but I can hope, I am sure, to see you soon again."

"That we can decide later," she replied, in a way that gave me some uneasiness.

"Can't I see you to-morrow?" I cried.

"Oh, dear, no!" was the response, with a laugh and a fillip from her fan. "You men are always so impatient! Let me see. Thursday will do, Thursday afternoon."

This being four days hence, I protested, but quite in vain, for she grew resolute against my seeing her sooner, so I was compelled to quit the place without better arrangement. The coachman drove to my lodgings in a quarter which, as they were considerably above my purse, it was no indignity for him to drive in, and, notwithstanding the fellow had nearly run over me an hour or two before, I was fool enough in my good spirits to give him a tip, which he accepted with poor grace.

Alone in my room, I could get no sleep during some hours, for it was now that I began to ask myself who this could be that, unmarried, could apparently maintain her own establishment and play the hostess. No uneasiness entered my head about the purity of one whom love had already made an angel, but I was consumed with curiosity about so peculiar a situation, to relieve which no hint had been dropped of either father or mother. I did not stop to account for liquors, supper and innocence at so late an hour, or for the source of so much elegance, which I finally concluded, as I fell asleep, was an inheritance, while her entertaining me thus was either an unusual thing, consequent upon the

accident, or a privilege of virgins in so modern a town. That she was fully as old as myself was the only thing that annoyed me, but what mattered that when I thought of those golden curls, those pouting lips, those dimpled, rosy cheeks and those eyes of heavenly blue? Thus for a long time I mused at my window, in love at first sight. Let them deride love who never have felt it. But the poet spoke with true knowledge of the heart, when he dwelt on the undying memory of love's young dream.

CHAPTER IV

THE NOVELIST AND A LETTER

THE next morning I awoke early, but lay an hour or two musing on the beauty I had seen last night, as if she were one of my dreams. All I could think of now was an excuse to be again at her side, but none readily presented itself, for I could not forget that she appeared firm in not wishing to see me before Thursday afternoon. These reflections soon accommodated themselves to a purpose of strolling near her apartments, in the hope of meeting or at least catching a glimpse of her, which I hastened to do as soon as I had had my breakfast. Nothing came of this sentry duty, however, though prolonged until a policeman on the same round grew suspicious. Then I bethought myself of flowers, the ambassadors of love, but when I came to pay for them, the price so staggered me that I could do no more than send a scanty handful along with a card which bore my name.

Evening approaching without any response, I was forced to take my dinner at my boarding-house in uncertainty, yet unwilling to set foot out of doors lest I be away when a reply should be received. Silently eating, I noticed that a well-dressed young man whom I had not hitherto seen at the table, appeared not unwilling to make an acquaintance with me, so I made

some commonplace remark on the dullness of the weather.

"That sort of thing depends entirely on one's own mind," responded he. "For my own part, I am so absorbed in my literary work, in the delightful business of creating characters, in observation of men and manners, and in the study of biography for the historical part of my fiction, that I really am unaware whether the sky is wet or dry, really quite unaware."

All this he exhaled with so lackadaisical an air that a more experienced person than myself would have seen immediately that I had to do with a fool.

"You are fond of books, then?" I cried.

"Passionately," he replied. "They are my gods. I live only for literature."

"I am delighted to hear that," said I, quite pleased, "for it is the only thing I ever cared for myself."

"Very fortunate," he answered. "But you have not, perhaps, given the world any child of your brain."

"No," said I, "nothing. Some day I hope to do so, but I cannot yet believe that I should put in print——"

"It is a mere matter of precocity," he interrupted. "You will probably do well to wait. I cannot expect every one to have such good fortune as myself, who have seen one of my novels sold to the number of two hundred thousand, the last being sympathetically illustrated by that very feeling artist, Ellison. It will give you pleasure to know that you have become acquainted with Willie Willis, the author of 'Roland Maclaire.'"

Unacquainted with the name of either the book or its author, I was momentarily under embarrassment, which, however, he fortunately set down to confusion on my part in thus confronting the great, until I was

able to express pleasure at the introduction and to give him my name in return.

"Such precocity as yours and so enormous a sale has a precedent only in Fanny Burney and her 'Evelina,'" I remarked.

"I do not recall the book you mention, nor am I acquainted with Miss Burney. Does she live in New York?" he inquired.

"I mean, you know," I replied, "Fanny Burney of Doctor Johnson's day."

"Ah, yes," he responded. "'O, rare Ben Jonson!' The other slips my mind. Those things are quite out of date now. The modern school is unsurpassed, and with the labor spent on my own manuscripts I have little time even for Scott and his contemporaries, like Fielding, whose 'Tom Jones,' however, I understand, is fairly good.

By this time I saw that this pretty genius was as much astray on dates as on taste, but I had the sense to say nothing as yet and to finish the meal in peace, whereupon he proposed my smoking a cigar in his room. This invitation I accepted in no small curiosity about a new species of authors with which the banks and the warehouses have lately been supplying the world in their discharged clerks. He discoursed at first on recent poets, some of whom he called "our sweetest singers," then for some time on fiction, mentioning a number of whelps like himself whose portraits were in the advertisements of books as writers of the first order, but he soon came back to himself and a new book, his masterpiece, which he should soon put forth as a great study in morals; nor was he satisfied until, producing a pile of sheets, he would have me

listen to a few passages of unusual delicacy. He earnestly begged my friendly suggestions.

"Upon these," he said, "I shall bestow great care. In every book an author should select a few scenes for careful study and frequent retouching, don't you think so?"

"Undoubtedly," I replied, "for, as Dryden says:

" 'Polish, repolish, every colour lay
And sometimes add, but oftener take away.' "

"I don't remember that poet," he replied, "but his idea meets my approval, if one desires to elegantly write anything."

"I notice, Mr. Willis," said I, "that you separate the infinitive from its sign. You say 'to elegantly write.' Do you approve that new form?"

"I don't understand you," he answered. "How else would you have one say it?"

" 'To write elegantly,' or 'elegantly to write,' is the classical form," I replied.

"Not at all," he retorted, with some irritation, but with serene composure. "I am particularly fond of the classics, as you can see; no man more so; but I am quite sure you are wrong."

"I beg your pardon," said I. "I am certain the thing was never heard of before the last thirty or forty years."

"And how much further back would any one want to seek?" he replied warmly. "Besides, you may go back as far as you please and find all the precedents you want for the form just as I have used it."

"I cannot agree with you at all in that," I rejoined.

"That is your misfortune, Mr. Cameron," he re-

sponded coldly, "and surely it would be folly to set up your judgment against that of an established author like myself, whom every newspaper in America has pronounced a classic already, a circumstance I would not ordinarily mention."

"Very well, sir," said I, rising in a bad temper. "You can imagine my opinion of a writer who speaks of Scott and Fielding as contemporaries."

"I will overlook all this, young man," he rejoined, though hardly a year older than myself, with the cool and patronising air of one above me in years as well as fame, "if you will only withdraw from my presence at once. Kindly be off with your old poets and what not, while men like myself are creating a new literature."

You may imagine the anger and contempt with which I left his room and sought my own, where to my delight I found on the table an envelope addressed in a lady's hand. With what impatience did I tear it open, to behold the signature, not of my Lillian, but, strange to say, of the daughter of old Sinclair, to a few lines which ran as follows:

DEAR MR. CAMERON: Perhaps you are not aware, but I heard the short talk between you and papa last night, and feeling sure, from your face, that you were worthy of everything you asked, I have been thinking about you since, because it is my duty, having so much, to think about those who have only a little, and to try to help them; and besides, I wished to tell you not to believe my father an ungenerous man, which he is not, but really a very generous one, indeed. So I got your address from your card, and I enclose twenty dollars to assist you, to be paid back some time in life when you have made your success, like the most of our American boys, and like papa himself.

Nobody knows this but you and me.

BETTY SINCLAIR.

I am quite sure I should recognise you if I were to see you again.

THE NOVELIST AND A LETTER 23

Had I at that time suffered more from the world, I should have been affected by this gentle act of kindness from one to whom I never had addressed a word, but, though not unappreciative of the act, I esteemed it vastly below its worth, the more especially as I was disappointed in the letter's not being from the object of my adoration. After some moments I replaced the money in an envelope, with the following letter addressed to her who had sent it:

MY DEAR MISS SINCLAIR: Permit me to express my profound thanks for your generous enclosure, which, however, I hasten to return. You have been kind indeed. The memory of it will, I trust, long cheer and brighten a struggle that promises to be a gloomy one against adversity. However, I am already becoming accustomed to the slights of fortune, which I hope I have the philosophy to despise. Were I to choose a motto, it would be the words of Lord Bolingbroke (in his exquisite "Reflections upon Exile"): "Uninterrupted misery has this good effect: as it continually torments, it finally hardens."

I beg you will trouble yourself no further with the fate of

CHARLES CAMERON.

Well pleased with this little performance, which I read over several times in a gloom that grew deeper every time, I at length dropped it in a letter-box, and after a while went sullenly to bed, quite forgetful of gentle Betty. I could recall only a glimpse of her. She appeared fair enough, but I was wholly absorbed in the golden vision of the *petit souper*, the enchanting unknown.

Such, however, is the force of wounded vanity that it can sometimes drive out the most powerful feelings of the heart, and I even awoke to express contempt for Willie Willis and all that tribe of introspective novelists, who, since the days of George Eliot, have abandoned narrative for tedious emotions or mental analysis. They dissect a doubt, they subdivide a sigh. Nor

is it to be forgotten in the present flood of fiction that, for the first time in its history, literature is consigned to a class who are neither students of letters nor acquainted with its traditions.

Early the next day, nothing being in my head but the fair goddess of the night before, I could not refrain, though forbidden to see her, from strolling by the apartment house in which she lived. Judge my astonishment when there came out of it no less a person than my uncle. He either did not see me or he pretended not to see me, so being in doubt for a moment whether to hail him, I let him go on. Nor were surprises at an end; for, a moment later, who should come from another direction and approach the entrance of the building but Maria Dole, walking rapidly, with a very determined expression.

"How do you do, Mrs. Dole?" I cried.

"Oh," she replied, "I—I'm very busy, Mr. Cameron."

"Perhaps you're looking for my uncle?" said I.

"I don't know what put that into your head," she answered, much annoyed.

"I don't know myself," I responded, "unless it was my seeing him leave here a minute ago."

I saw at once it was he she was after, since she instinctively turned away from the house, then hesitated as if to conceal her real intentions, and finally, with some good wishes for my future in New York, went down the street in a hurry.

As you may imagine, I thought all this a trifle odd.

CHAPTER V

AT THE PLAY

THE next day I was fool enough again to loiter in the vicinity of Lillian's apartments, but after a time, becoming ashamed of so much devotion when it brought me no reward, I resolved to have a grievance and forget her. Meanwhile, pressed by a sense of my own affairs, which were those of a man with only a few dollars remaining in the world, I had time to reflect upon my means of continuing to live in quarters so genteel, or even to live at all. Already there had been returned to me by the publishers of two magazines a farcé and a short story, while one of the reviews had rejected a critique of Addison with such haste as made me feel they must have met it at the postoffice to dispatch it back. These were performances on which I had greatly relied, so, in poor spirits at dinner that night, I was much pleased to have my landlady invite me to her table. She was a plump old Englishwoman who, having formerly had more of this world's goods, was pleased to remember more than she had ever possessed, together with social acquaintances and influence among prominent families. The latter, though you never saw them about her, were, you were given to understand, on terms of such intimacy with her as frequently to beg her not to spoil one of their most select

companies by being absent. A more righteous old gossip I never heard, though kindly enough when shown some flattery.

The British matron is more tolerant of sin than of scandal, and will forgive secret adultery sooner than open divorce. Her frailties are about as common as those of women of other races, but she will less readily throw away her reputation. You will be disappointed in the slowness of her faculties, yet the blooming skin bespeaks her health, her step the freedom of her race, her voice both strength and softness. When you see the true British gentlewoman you may easily imagine that she has suckled the conquerors of India and bred those islanders who have brought back the treasures of Africa to the Thames.

There were no merits in her race, but Mrs. Dobson was fully aware of them, so I soon managed to direct the conversation in the direction of compliments, which were swallowed by her as a frog gulps flies.

"You are going to do well in New York, Mr. Cameron," said my hostess. "In fact, I may say as how our society here needs young men like you. Confined to the house as I am by this gout, I am unable to make you a few acquaintances I have in mind, but as soon as my foot is better I shall take pleasure in doing you a turn of that sort."

With that she began to descant on the pains in her big toe, the swelling in the joints, and the invasion of her calf by this malady, which inevitably recurred about the month of the death of her grandfather in the old country years before, an aristocratic old drinker who had given his descendants the gout in most expensive

wines. From this theme she wandered to religious topics, including the declining morals of our women.

"There's a day of reckoning for some as I know," she exclaimed, "and take my word for it they will get their reward in this world itself. I am too good a Christian not to know that God gives us some of our punishments without postponing them until the next world."

"Indeed, it must be so, Mrs. Dobson," I replied.

"So? Of course it is so," quoth the dame. "Let the offence be ever so small and it is paid while we live. There is my cousin, Lady Creggsby, in Somersetshire, who was thrown from her horse within a year after she disappointed her mother in not marrying Captain Nettleton, of the Horse Guards. No, young man, we Christians must bear with patience whatever befalls us, for it's God's way of repaying us for some little thing or other we have done or left undone."

"I never thought of it before, Mrs. Dobson," I replied, with proper hypocrisy, "but it must be as you say. Take, now, your present gout. God is probably, in His wisdom, imposing on you a little punishment for something overlooked."

"I don't understand you," cried the lady. "You don't intimate that Catherine Dobson ever did anything she ought to have been ashamed of?"

"Oh, the very contrary, my dear Mrs. Dobson," I replied, pretty red in the face, "the very contrary."

"Well, I don't know what else you can mean, which is certainly disappointing in a young person of your appearance. I'll have you understand, young man, I never did a thing in my life but the good God Himself

would have approved. You'll excuse me now, as I have to be looking after my guests."

With this, she took leave of a considerably embarrassed young diplomat.

In no better spirits I betook myself to the street after eating the meal, and, wandering in the gay part of Broadway, was attracted into one of the theatres, where, at no great cost, I got a seat in the balcony. There being yet some time before the play, I was not sorry to find next me a man, somewhat older than myself, who seemed willing to talk. Our conversation naturally began with the drama, which he remarked was in a sorry state nowadays, both from immorality and want of taste. As this was a pleasant subject to me, I had a good deal to say, particularly of the classic. The latter, I said, was never more immoral than in the plays of Calderon, who, after having his heroes commit unspeakable crimes, would glorify them by signal acts of Christian faith.

"Exactly!" exclaimed my new acquaintance. "It reminds me of incidents related by Wallace in his work on Russia. A criminal, he says, having murdered a man for his money, refrained from eating some cooked meat he found in the house, because it was a fast day. Another story is of a fellow who plans a murder, which he subsequently commits, and deliberately commends his designs to the saints by religious meditation in a church. The middle ages of our Christian history are full of such things, so I often wonder whether the world has not grown better in spite of Christianity than because of it. It seems to me that what Christianity should find most difficult to explain is that during the period when everybody believed in it profoundly, vice

was worse and commonest, while to-day, when scepticism is general, the morals of individuals and of states are infinitely higher. In the middle ages men would rob or murder you for a trifle, but they would be unable to sleep at night if they had omitted some of the requirements of the Church of Christ. They absolutely believed in Christ, for they were willing to be roasted in His name."

"What you mean is," I remarked, "that as that was the time when men believed most in God, why was not the Church able to make their morals better than now, when half of them don't believe at all?"

"That is it," said he, "and it seems a poor answer to say that it was all due to the middle ages. Why didn't our religion improve the middle ages? During that period the Moors in Southern Spain had a stable government, arts, science and justice, while our people not only in the North, but in Spain and Italy, were ravishing women and burning, poisoning or gibbeting each other without regard to law. This was after a thousand years of Christianity."

Not a little interested in all this, as it disclosed, no matter whether he were right or not, a man of reflection, I gradually discovered that I was talking to one Colby, an assistant editor of one of the daily newspapers. This was an acquaintance the value of which to an impecunious fellow like me ought to have been apparent, but which I did not immediately see. However, he appeared to notice that my reading was beyond what is ordinary, and we exchanged cards.

By this time the curtain was up and the players, for the benefit of the audience, were telling each other innumerable things, which, as in the case of Puff, there

seemed to be no excuse at all for their relating, as, in the nature of things, the other character must have known all about them—that one was the other's cousin, living hard by, and another come into a fortune a month before in the house of the very man to whom he was telling it. Having no play-bill, I was not advised of the plot or the actors. Toward the close of the first act, my eye being for a moment off the stage, I heard a sudden burst of applause, such as attends the entry of a favourite, and, turning my eyes to the scene, I sat spell-bound. I gazed and gazed again, catching the arm of my companion, but unable to turn away my eyes. Could it be possible? There, in all the unspeakable charms of perfect blonde beauty, smiling at the house with mingled sweetness and pride, and aware that every glance belonged to her—there, I say, stood Lillian. Not for some time was I aware that Colby was regarding me with amusement.

“Have you never seen Lillian?” he inquired.

I knew not how to answer him, for by this time the dazzling creature began to speak in a voice which made my heart throb faster. The rest passed like a dream. I scarcely spoke another word to Colby, for even when the curtain was down I was too much engrossed to say much, a disturbance of my mind which I think puzzled him a good deal. At first I could not believe it was she, as I had never doubted her life was a private one, but the resemblance was not to be mistaken. Meanwhile the play went on, a comedy of little merit, in which, very happily, no lover took much liberty with Lillian, the principal lady of the company. At times I fancied she caught my eye. I even tried to catch hers with some motion of my hand or expression of my face.

About the fourth act Colby left me, saying he must be at his office, and I had barely sense to say a cordial good-night. At last the play was over with, so I had to take my leave, repairing reluctantly to my room for want of an excuse to see the beautiful woman that very night. I could not sleep. Luckily, though, I was not yet in despair at the immense inequality of our conditions, for, until a young lover is brought to his senses rudely about that, he sees no difficulty in it at all. No, I was quite satisfied both of her love for me and of my ability to take care of her. The marriage would be pre-eminently a happy one. It had its precedents, too, among literary men like myself. Think of Molière! Had he not married an actress, the pretty Béjart? That marriage had been a—— But no matter for that. Armande Béjart was not my Lillian. I should write for her, whose acting I deemed as faultless as her face. It is in my comedies she must hereafter appear. Not a thought of jealousy came into my mind, as every pleasant glance she had given me the other night was fondly translated by my infatuated heart. Fortune would pour in upon us along with fame, but our happiest moments would be those when we could fly from the crowd to be alone. We should go, we should go to some soft Italian scene, and there, forgetting the harsh North, wander between the mountains and the shore, through groves and sunny vales renowned in song, or doze and read and dream on the sands by a summer sea. Sweet are the visions of youth!

CHAPTER VI

THE BEAUTIFUL ACTRESS

THE next morning my thoughts were more sober. The little money I had brought with me was so nearly spent that I had barely sufficient to pay my landlady through a maid who performed for her that commercial service. So, notwithstanding I felt relieved in being able at least to do that, I was depressed by the future. A day or two previously I had written to my uncle at Albany, disclosing my condition as well as the poor reception I had received at the hands of old Sinclair. The answer, which I now opened, was as follows:

MY DEAR NEPHEW: I wish to say that I really think it wrong to help young men when they are blessed, as you are, with good health. It does them a great injustice.

Sinclair's coldness fills me with disgust. I am afraid he is a hypocrite. He could easily have helped you, and it was his duty to do so, considering that he saw you had your way to make in a strange city. It was very unfair in him to attempt to throw you back on relatives a hundred miles away.

At a later period I could not think of this letter without smiling at its selfishness, but, I assure you, it was nothing to smile at that morning in December. However, youth is seldom long in bad spirits. I fell again to thinking of Lillian, put my clothes in order, and resolved to be happy that afternoon in her company though I should never have another dollar in the world.

Imagine, on my being received by Lillian, the disgust I felt at finding we should not be alone. There were already there three or four men and women in conversation with the beauty, who, though she greeted me with a warm and meaning glance, indicated with coquettish management of her lips and eyebrows that we must put up with company. Exquisite work of nature, she had only to look into my eyes to set my heart throbbing and to make my knees tremble beneath me. However, keeping my self-possession through a conceit which had always been a part of me, I appeared pretty much at ease, I fancy, and entered into the conversation. Lillian, for her part, immediately made known the chance that had occasioned our acquaintance. She recounted the affair in the street with the exaggeration natural to women, whereupon one of the ladies declared it was terrible, another that she had never heard anything like it in her life, and a third that she could not see how I had come out of it alive. This led to abuse of the policemen for their not being in a position to warn persons crossing the streets. All were unanimous that there ought to be laws on the subject. Meanwhile, my own coolness was liberally extolled until I felt myself somewhat of a hero and had to affect an unconsciousness of my great courage, which sat as easily upon me as if I were accustomed to be trampled by stallions.

There soon came in other visitors, among them three or four dandies whose elegance started my first reflections on my lack of fine clothes, since, while I was by no means shabby, I was clearly behind the fashion. Of the men two soon showed themselves to be actors; one, Alden by name, I recognised as having been in Lillian's

company the night before, a popular and pretty good player. The talk now speedily turned on stage affairs, and the actors all declared themselves sick of their parts.

As they were in no good humour with each other, every one remained oblivious of me, who was neither player nor editor. Upon Lillian plainly rested the task of harmony, as, the company being hers, the play had been arranged to her advantage. An unruly flock, though not wholly selfish, they were evidently hard to please. The character of an actor resembles that of a child. He is almost always vain, sensitive and jealous. Neither travel nor the study of human manners has any effect on the simplicity of these traits, while, in equal degree, people of that calling are generally impulsive and generous. These qualities being uppermost in those I now met, Lillian finally put them all in good humour, each with a compliment and some with promises of better things.

For my own part, after essaying a few remarks on Congreve or Goldsmith and finding only very modern instances were wanted, of which I knew nothing, I was obliged to be a mere listener, hoping all the while they would soon leave off and go home, so that I could be alone with Lillian. That lady, busy though she was, furnished me the stimulant of an occasional glance, from which I had the credulity to take much encouragement. However, I did not fail to observe that Alden also received a fair share, on which account I immediately conceived a great prejudice against him, a prejudice that became all the greater because I could find nothing wrong in him.

Alden was one of those actors who have just talent

enough to avoid, under all circumstances, the fault of awkwardness. Without the slightest genius, he was always sure to do well. His success was in those so-called gentleman's characters in which it is a merit to change the expression of the face by no more than a movement of the eyebrows, and to alter the costume no more than from a smoking-jacket to an evening suit. Elegantly dull, he would be indifferent with a cigarette, or serious over a late cup of coffee. He was the same in every part, but never bad in any.

When at length the company began to disperse, I was the last to go, a little annoyed without knowing of what I had to complain. Determined to have a few words alone with Lillian, I was still less pleased to see that in this she was giving me no aid, nor had I yet stopped to reflect that this beautiful actress, as old as myself and at the height of her success, would have very little reason to trouble her head about me. It would have been still more mortifying to my pride to consider that perhaps the hospitality I had already enjoyed came of no kindlier feelings than that, having nearly killed me with her horse, she felt herself obliged to offer me a few cups of tea.

"My ladies are all delighted with you," she said, not resuming her seat so as to afford me an excuse to linger after the last had gone. "You are going to do some mischief here, I am afraid, so I hope I shall often catch a glimpse of you on the other side of the curtain."

"And nowhere else, Miss——" I inquired, anxiously.

"Where else do you mean?" she replied.

"Why, here; anywhere you permit."

"What a flirt you are!" she exclaimed in a tone that gave me a great opinion of myself. "You know you

will forget all about me as soon as your back is turned. You men of the world merely trifle with us poor women."

Utterly inexperienced with coquettes, I actually conceived I had the advantage of the famous beauty, inasmuch that a little more of this kind of talk would have made me feel sorry for her, the fact being that she was too tactful to dismiss me in a way that would hurt my feelings. Besides, like most coquettes, she desired, even though she had decided to see no more of me, to leave me enough hope to worship her in secret.

"Believe me," I exclaimed, "I will never look at another woman on this earth if you——"

"Oh, I understand. You talk like the rest of them. I'll warrant you have fifty dainty photographs on your dressing-table you are ashamed to look in the face."

"I will throw them all in the fire," I replied, too pleased with being thought a gay deceiver to deny having conquests. "And, by the way," I added, "you have here a heap of portraits yourself." Saying this, I ran my hand through a trayful at my side, picking up two or three photographs to tease her. "What has become of this victim?" I asked. "And this, and—but—why, here is a photograph of my uncle; yes, my uncle."

She looked perplexed. "Oh, I see," said she, "you are the nephew of George Cameron—the one at Albany, I believe?"

"Why, yes," I replied, "and you know him?"

"Only a trifle," she replied. "We poor stage people have to meet everybody—including some," looking archly at me, "who would show us no mercy if we were not determined to protect ourselves. But go, now. I

must have my nap before night. Go, I say, you dear, bad man. Go."

I was in a sweet humour with my fine self when I turned towards my lodgings, and on the way I repaired to a handsome drinking-place, where, swallowing a stout swig, I surveyed myself in the mirror, looked rakish, and felt like a devil of a fellow. But my feelings were, after all, less the exultation of vanity than the sensations of one truly in love with the most perfect creature in the world.

Once or twice, though, I recalled my uncle's photograph. Why should she know him, after all? In spite of myself I felt she had not been frank.

CHAPTER VII

LILLIAN

PERHAPS I should at this juncture give you some description of female charms that had been the delight of the town for four years, and which a very anchorite could not have beheld with indifference. In age Lillian was about twenty-one, of good height, and of shape delicately buxom. Indeed, her figure was so far past criticism that even her rivals allowed it perfection. She had luxuriant yellow hair in a tumult of waves and curls, big blue eyes, a skin both warm and smooth. Laughter lurked in her glance, nor did two dimples suggest undue plumpness in a face nearly oval. On the whole, I can give no better notion of her appearance than to say that she seemed to belong to the dazzling style of a former age, to be one of those historic beauties who succumbed to the villainy of princes, and who humbled, at woeful cost to themselves, the pride of queens.

Born in the South, she had, through the necessities of the stage, nearly rid herself of local accent, but she retained many of the characteristics of Southern women; above all, their imperturbable sweetness in circumstances tedious or exasperating. Generosity, vivacious healthy good-nature, and a disposition to flatter, as well as banter, distinguished her countenance. On

the other hand, the coquette was not frivolous, and only the more experienced observers anticipated trouble for beauty undefended by either home or selfishness. All agreed that a dangerous sort of imp was playing hide-and-seek within her, that her character was unsettled, and that fate was undecided whether to adopt her weakness or her strength.

At this period Lillian was at her height in elegant comedy, both classical and modern, a charming Beatrice or Lady Spanker, abounding in healthy animal spirits, in spite of which you could see that great natural tact was on the turn towards worldliness. The latter you rarely perceived, for as yet it had gained in her impulsive breast only a trifling hold.

She had been in New York just four years. During the first two she had been guarded by an aunt, now dead, as was her own mother, and at this time she was mistress of a suite of apartments where she was visited by her father. This parent resided in South Carolina, save for visits to Washington and occasionally to New York, the cold manners of which he found intolerable.

CHAPTER VIII

OBLIGED TO SEEK WORK

THE next morning I awoke more infatuated than ever. Do what I would, there was nothing before my mind but those blooming, voluptuous charms. To no purpose did I now remind myself that to her I could be nobody. Morning did, indeed, dissipate the vanity of the evening, but fresh forces were continually poured in by the longings of the heart. Her extraordinary beauty, which alone could excite an audience; her age, undoubtedly equal to my own; the luxury of her life, all these, though they placed her immeasurably beyond me, could not extinguish hope. The whole day was wasted in finding reasons, as well as resolutions, to seek her again. When night came on I was first before the curtain, spending in the ticket nearly all that was left me from the still greater extravagance of flowers. These last I sent behind the curtain. Nor did folly fail of its reward in several glances from the stage, glances all the more bewitching from the emotions of the scene. Lost to everything else in the house, I invariably started and concluded the applause.

Finding fresh intoxication and encouragement, too, during this performance, I resolved to see her again that night. For this purpose I waited at the players' door, and was not disappointed; for, coming out, she

recognised me with a smile. Alden, I noticed, was at her side.

"You encouraged me very much this evening," she whispered in a tone that put me in ecstasy. "You make it too hard to forget you, Mr. Cameron."

Much excited, I followed her to the carriage, nodding coldly to her escort.

"No, no," she said, with a glance in which I perceived regret. "At some other time. You know—I will explain. Good-night."

With that she was in her carriage and away.

No longer could it be doubted. I was beloved. The queen of the stage was mine. Her triumphs were my own. I rejoiced on my way home in the pictures of her that I saw on the billboards, in the windows and among the advertisements of various wares which claimed a merit in her approval or had been honoured with her name.

I had certainly been the happiest of mankind during these few days, had I not found myself now in sorry need of money. My little funds were at last reduced to three dollars. Every hope I could give myself in the publishers was exhausted, and my board would soon again be due. Nevertheless, I was at the play the next night, received the arrows of love again, and was happy in seeing her at the door, where, though the crowd prevented our speaking to each other, she was able to work further mischief with a glance in which pleasure and sadness were fascinatingly blended.

By the next day my affairs became pressing, for it was with great pains I was able to pay for my washing. I began to walk the streets, in order to get suggestions of employment and to scan the advertisements

of those who wanted young men. The place of salesman or of clerk I could not consider. There were no precedents in literary biography for that. Genius had often been ragged, but places like those it always appeared to have escaped.

Youth betrays its troubles as quickly as its joys, so my low spirits that evening did not escape the notice of another boarder, the assistant manager of a wholesale house, who from time to time had had talks with me. Offering me a cigar in a corner of the smoking-room after dinner, he asked me to excuse an older man like himself for inquiring whether I was not feeling somewhat *blue*. This induced frankness on my part, until by degrees he was made acquainted with my whole situation. He then informed me that he never failed to see through the surface of things, or to read a man as easily as a book, so he had hardly needed to be told how things stood with me, illustrating his sagacity with numerous instances, in all of which he appeared to have rendered good turns to a succession of ungrateful young knaves. After such ill-usage by human nature I was much surprised at his making an offer to me. He could make room for me, he said, among his shipping clerks. Earnestly thanking him, I promptly accepted the place without consideration for the dignity of letters.

"The job," he said, "is nothing to grumble at. The hours are easy—from half-past eight in the morning until six in the evening, with half an hour for lunch at noon. Our house prides itself on being reasonable. We require some night work, an occasional Sunday morning besides; though, you understand, there come special seasons when all have to work without regard

to hours; but, considering that you begin with seven dollars a week and the hours are so reasonable, you'll not mind giving the house occasional nights and half-holidays, if you have the good of the house at heart. That's what we want. We want young men who work for us, and not for themselves."

My heart sank at the picture he was drawing, but he went on, explaining the requirements of punctuality, that each man was assigned a number, that he must press this number upon a wheel, by way of registry, every time he left the house or re-entered it, so that even a moment's tardiness might be put to his discredit.

"The only particular, though," he resumed, "in which the company is inclined to be severe is in what I call the ability to make excuses. We don't want any man that can give a good excuse."

"But what," I inquired, "what if it be a really good one? What do you do?"

"Discharge him. Discharge the fellow at once. No excuses at all is our maxim, young man. Take, for instance, a shipping clerk. He will say, probably, he is too sick that day. Discharge him. Sickness is no excuse. If one can plead sickness, then all of them can. Discharge him. That is the best tonic for the best of them. No, sir; a house should be kind, but it must be firm."

I asked him indifferently when I might begin my work, to which he replied that I might begin the next morning.

"We have received an unexpected lot of new business and are in need of men, but I am making a particular point of making room for you."

Acknowledging his kindness in thus making room for what he had to have, I bade him good-night with a heavy heart.

As I was going to my room I sat down to chat a moment with Mrs. Dobson, in the course of which talk I happened to mention my uncle.

"Him that lives at Albany, you mean?" she exclaimed. "Your uncle, eh? Well, I don't know him personally, so to speak, but I almost feel as much, being acquainted with his housekeeper, Mrs. Dole, who came from my part of the old country, though on account of some difference in our family rank she had no opportunity to be familiar, not meaning, you understand, any reflections on Mrs. Dole, a friend of yours——"

"No friend of mine, Mrs. Dobson," I replied.

"Well," she continued, "I'm not blaming you if some things disgust you, and God knows it's not for me to pass judgment on Maria Dole, but people will talk, Mr. Cameron, and it's no small temptation, that fortune at Albany, to a woman in Maria Dole's position, though there'd be less talk, she ought to see, if she'd let the man at least take a trip to New York without following him to the apartments of prominent persons who are watched by all the reporters."

"What in the world do you mean, Mrs. Dobson?" I inquired.

"It's not for me to say," she replied, with a knowing look, "having friends on the press, where all this thing is in everybody's mouth."

Unable to get more out of her, I grew testy.

"You spoke of my uncle's fortune, Mrs. Dobson. If he makes no will the property passes to me, but if he

makes one, Maria Dole or any one else may have it, every cent of it, for all I care."

With this I bade her a sufficiently pleasant good-night and went to bed more disgusted with life than ever.

CHAPTER IX

THE ENDING OF MY LABOUR

NEVER was mortal more wretched than I when I found myself the next morning, at a dirty desk among boxes and bales. I had hoped to have at least a little portion of a room to myself, but I was now glad to have space for my elbows, whilst daylight could be enjoyed during not above an hour of the day, as we were huddled in a basement which received light only through a glass sidewalk. Nor was my labour of the dignity even of clerical service. I was obliged to write upon the boxes, with a little black paint, their destination, making at first sorry work of it, to the contempt of a little whelp close by, whose slang and cheap manner of making fun filled me with disgust. My unhappiness increasing each day, I was, by the end of the third, a miserable object indeed, nor could anything less than desperation have kept me at it so long.

Meanwhile I had to apologise for some errors which had caused inconvenience, every mistake, however trivial, being infinitely exaggerated among people in these occupations. Being asked to explain one of them, I answered that I knew not how it had happened, as I had thought very carefully before doing it.

"Thought!" exclaimed my superior. "There's the trouble, damn it! Don't think! We don't hire our

young men to think. We do the thinking ourselves. All we want of you is to *do* what *we* think."

This censure being overheard by others, my next blunder was followed by whispers that Cameron had been thinking again. However, the whole business came to a head pretty quickly, when I finally labelled a carload of boxes to Portland, Oregon, instead of Portland, Maine, the shipment being off by what is called fast freight. In point of fact, the blame was just as much due to one considerably above me in authority, but as he contrived to throw it on me there was nothing left me but to get out of the place before I should be dismissed. This I did, receiving with a hanging look a few dollars paid me in silence.

Heartily sick of my situation, I nevertheless bought a seat at the play that night, beheld my beauty again, the delight of the house, and shared in the distribution of her smiles. Flowers I could no longer send her, as I was now in such straits that I had had to remove from my fine boarding-house to humble lodgings and to pawn my watch. Things went from bad to worse. In a few days I was at my wits' ends, in a few more in the first stages of hunger. Then it was that I did an act of weakness, the shame of which has lingered in my mind ever since. I spent my last quarter in a telegram to my uncle: "If you don't send me ten dollars I shall commit suicide," to which the old brute sent promptly the reply: "Commit suicide."

CHAPTER X

WHY I WAS UNHAPPY

WHAT agonies did I endure that day! It was, however, the worst. In the depths of despair, returning at night from an unhappy walk, I found a reply to one of the many answers I had sent to advertisements, a communication from a widow who, desiring a tutor for a son of twelve, appointed an hour the next day when I should call and, so to speak, be inspected.

You may well believe I was not behind-hand in keeping my appointment, repairing thither with infinite anxiety. I had the luck to find the lady at home.

The house was in the most elegant quarter of the town, not a great way from old Sinclair's, where I had fared so poorly, and in all respects, within and without, the abode of luxury. The family I found was, saving the servants, only the mother and boy. To this brat, who was at once brought before me, I instantly took a great dislike, for he was so ugly, as well as mean in countenance, that it seemed inexcusable in anybody to have begotten him. Plainly indulged and self-willed, he had a bad digestion from excess in candies while his mother had her eyes upon him, and cigarettes when her back was turned. Paradise in getting on with this whelp was before me, but after the wholesale house and six days of poor food, anything was welcome.

The woman being of simple, vulgar origin, was very glad to find herself raised to a position where she could snub some one and be a lady. I showed her the letter my uncle had given me to his friend, a rich man of leisure then in Europe, for I had had the foresight to bring this with me, as well as the prudence to say nothing of old Sinclair. Her manner changed very favourably towards me as she saw I was the nephew of a rich old gentleman on familiar terms with one of the most fashionable families in town. She engaged me forthwith, setting my salary at seventy-five dollars a month, besides residence with her family.

To her account of her son I listened with the air of one who not only believed it all, but felt it was even too little to say of so unusual a child. She suggested our taking walks together.

"I shall be delighted," I said, "to take him long walks, Mrs. Johnson."

"Not very long, I hope," replied she, "for his health is none too good."

"Of course, not too long, madam, as I shall make it a point to lose no time from our studies."

"Not too much time over books, either, Mr. Cameron, for I am not so sure about his eyes, as his father, shortly after he turned sixty, was considerably bothered in reading."

When I came down to breakfast the first morning I found the lady already astir. She told me she had not yet ordered breakfast, except to give her son something, as he was only a boy, but had been waiting to see what my wishes were.

"I scarcely care for a mouthful myself, Mr. Cameron," she said, with no small affectation. "I rarely

eat in the morning, and I suppose, like most intelligent people, you care nothing for breakfast."

Famished though I was, I made it clear I cared nothing for that meal which, among people of elegance, was in bad repute, growing in truth quite emphatic in my criticism of all eating as a savage and lowly inclination not to be indulged.

The good lady soon left me, to give her orders for the breakfast, which, notwithstanding our style of talk, I doubted not, furnished by a fat and hearty hostess, would be of the old-fashioned sort, a spread of fat little sausages, fried eggs and hot cakes, without end of toast and coffee, besides everything else that the imagination of hunger could conceive. We were soon seated at the table, which, in truth, looked a little bare to begin with.

"It is such a pleasure," said Mrs. Johnson, "to sit down with a man of well-bred appetite. Nothing is worse than eating in the morning, when the stomach is empty. Time should be given the stomach to accustom itself, the best books all say, to the fresh reception of food. For this reason, a fair little luncheon should follow a light breakfast, and then one can eat a good meal, not excessively, of course, but healthfully, at dinner."

"Exactly, Mrs. Johnson," I replied. "It would be better if more people followed such sensible rules."

With this I descanted on frugal fare, on hardy, primitive races of men, as well as on modern gluttony, the sure concomitant of declining virtue. By this time I was served with a cup of hot water.

"Tea and coffee," said Lady Bountiful, "are poisonous things, and I am glad you don't seem to crave

them. Will you have one of those patent biscuits? Toast we never have, nor bread at all before noon."

I took and devoured the biscuit in silence, being past all further eloquence, and was told that butter having been found injurious to Eddie, it could not appear on the table, though I could see by crumbs on that young gentleman's clothes that he had already been faring better in the kitchen. I was next allowed an orange, which concluded the breakfast.

At luncheon what was our fare but milk, porridge and dry toast served in small portions to the praises of fashionable simplicity. To add to my annoyance I sniffed tantalising odours from the kitchen, of fish and bacon which the servants, unthinking and obstinate kine, undoubtedly demanded. As for my good lady, she was so plainly mad on theories of food and of growing healthy by fashionable starvation that I was in despair. However, I contrived to keep a good face in spite of the pangs within, for I felt sure that nature would conquer this folly in the woman by dinner-time. That repast concluded my hopes with thin soup, a poor bit of fish, a potato and some accursed kind of bread.

I was now experiencing the whims of the rich and the eccentricities of the idle. Pies, steaks, rich jellies, and steaming roasts haunted my sleep. I dreamed of good cheer and awoke in the midst of banquets. Without a penny in my pocket during my walks by day, I would go by restaurants and baker shops, like a hungry child, to view their savoury wares.

CHAPTER XI

LILLIAN AND MY UNCLE

BUT I was not too hungry to remember Lillian, of whom troublesome doubts, indefinable jealousy, began to enter my heart. To steal from my employment an afternoon when I could see her was, accordingly, continually in my mind; so, after some days, I was again at her door. The servant hesitated to admit me, as one under uncertainty concerning his instructions, and when he did so, I felt in his mistress' greeting that something was wrong.

"How unfortunate!" she exclaimed. "I am just about to go out. You will excuse me, won't you?"

I saw she was dressed to lounge, so I asked if she meant that she was going out immediately.

"This very moment, just now," she replied, noticing her dress. "I must change this gown. You'll excuse me, won't you?" This very uneasily, and then adding with a pout: "You dear man."

Her manner being more unsatisfactory even than her words, I was rising slowly to obey, when she abruptly moved by me to the door that led into the hall. Somebody was coming in.

"This way, if you please," I could hear the servant say.

"Just a moment, please," exclaimed Lillian to the servant beyond the curtains; "a moment, please."

She was too late. The guest entered. It was my uncle.

Clever though she was, Lillian was at a loss for words. My uncle was in confusion, and I in amazement. But the actress was the first to recover her wits.

"How pleasant that you two should meet here!" she said.

Then she laughed foolishly, my uncle murmured some lie or other, and I, for want of any, hurried out of the house.

Had Lillian appeared little concerned, had she not obviously endeavoured to prevent my seeing my uncle, or his seeing me, I should have been less perplexed, and, even as it was, I could not feel jealous of gray hairs. The next day, to my joy, I received a note from her, setting five o'clock that day to see me.

"I wished," said she, "to give you an hour. We have been so badly intruded on. You know you interest me, so I may as well admit it."

Not for a moment did she make a point of wishing to explain anything. That came about apparently in the most natural way.

"Do you know," she observed, when she had introduced that topic, "I was aware your uncle was coming. He met me a week or two ago, and—well, you know—sometimes old gentlemen will insist—you understand, and I haven't the slightest objection to giving him an occasional half-hour, if that will do him any good—but, what I mean is, I knew there were strained relations between you."

"I suppose he told you he doesn't like me," I answered. "Confound his money. Let him give it to any one he pleases."

"Hush, dear," said she. "He's made a will, I suppose?"

"I don't know and don't care, the old——"

"Now, don't grow angry. The law of it is, isn't it, that if he makes no will, the estate goes to you?"

"Oh, yes," answered I, "but let him make——"

Then she stopped me again, shifted the subject and sent me home happy enough, when some one else sent up a card.

CHAPTER XII

HOW I LOST EMPLOYMENT

TO see Lillian frequently was out of the question. My duties at Mrs. Johnson's filled all my afternoons, especially as this lady, knowing my elegant connections, would make a companion of me over a cup of tea and introduce me to such ladies as happened to visit her between three and six. Here, I may add, we commonly heard the praises of fasting.

The majority probably had as little patience as I with this singularity, but I could occasionally hear ladies discuss with her their rival indifference to food. I saw plainly enough that eating was a thing to be ashamed of, and that the world had been in error about this practice too long. Foods that stayed the stomach without imposing upon it the indignity of digestion, small tablets with which you could speedily charge yourself, and liquids which ignored the palate though they had to pass it, these were the dainty morsels of science.

Passing the drawing-room one day, I found Mrs. Johnson in conversation with a young woman, whom I had not seen in the house before, but to whom I was then introduced. Judge of my surprise to hear the name of Sinclair. It was no other than Betty, who, with prompt cordiality, indicated her pleasure in seeing me again, while explaining to her hostess that I had

one day called at her father's house upon business, a pleasant and successful answer to Mrs. Johnson's rising curiosity.

As this young lady is to appear many times hereafter in this account of myself, it is proper I should fairly describe her now. Betty was about nineteen, plump but not fat, rosy with health and of medium height. She had pretty teeth and round eyes, together with really handsome and luxuriant hair. Of happy countenance, she had a responsive smile and an agreeable laugh, though she was by no means given to levity, being, upon the contrary, a girl of intelligent and serious mind. Above all things, her face possessed the charm that never grows dull, credulity, the unmistakable sign of female innocence, the stamp of Heaven upon the pure.

After we had talked some time, Betty arising to go, I asked if I might walk with her to her home, forgetting for a moment the unpleasant memories I had of it. The pleasure she showed at this, though not too marked, was sufficient to disclose that I was very kindly regarded, and indeed, had my heart not been so full of Lillian, I would have attached more importance to her favour and have drawn more sanguine conclusions from the smiles of the daughter of a millionaire.

On the way home Betty made plain her interest in me.

"You were brave to return that little money, Mr. Cameron," she said.

Then she wished to know how I had fared without it, how I had had the good luck to get the place of tutor in so rich a family, how hard the work was,

whether I liked the boy, and a dozen other things which it was pleasant to be asked.

"You are going to make a great success in life," said Betty, confidently.

Prolonging the walk somewhat, we talked on various subjects which further showed the sweet candour of her mind. When I happened to mention atheists, she remarked :

"They are simply trying to appear bright. The thing is so plain. If there is no God, where has all this world come from?"

Betty now contrived to increase her visits to Mrs. Johnson's. Indeed, she grew suddenly devoted to that lady, who, feeling the pleasure which attentions of youth give to those who are no longer young, encouraged her visits, while I, having really little to do, was able and glad to give her much of my company.

No man on earth could have been more enviable than I if it had not been for two things—my love for Lillian, and those incessant clamours of my stomach. When I looked at my hostess I wondered what she lived upon, since, far from being a sickly dyspeptic, she was of portly build, of healthy complexion, round, even robust. One would naturally have set her down as something of a glutton. Yet, to trifle with the trifles she permitted to be served was plainly a joy superior to eating, while I, poor blockhead, had estopped myself, so to speak, from asserting appetite, by my philosophic disdain of it to begin with, besides having practically done as much for her by repeated compliments on the daintiness of her eating—compliments that added to her enjoyment of her own singularity.

One day, Mrs. Johnson and the boy having gone to

dine at a friend's, I saw my chance and gave the butler an order for a substantial meal, explaining to him as best I could a whim of appetite, for I could not admit to the flunky that all he had heard me say at the table against having one's fill was a lie. The fellow, seeing through it all, ordered for me a fat steak, potatoes fried in butter, and the Lord knows what, as much for his own enjoyment at seeing me expose my hypocrisy as for any pleasure to me. On this, the moment it was set before me, I fell like a wolf, the water running from my eyes as I began to devour it. I needed Gargantua's mouth. Hardly, however, was I fairly started, when, to my utter confusion, Mrs. Johnson, who had unexpectedly returned, appeared in the room. Not Sancho under the cruel wand of Doctor Agüero suffered more than I as I looked up with bursting cheeks, unable to get my voice through the enormous mouthful. At first, in my embarrassment, I was about to tell her I was not well, an absurdity which perhaps even her slow head would have deemed cause for laughter; but as, after some indecision, she at length took a seat, I asked if she would not have something.

"Not at all, Mr. Cameron," she replied. "You know how little I care for heavy meals. Some little trifle will do, John."

"I mentioned to John that, on account of your absence, I would have a bit more than usual, but, as you see, he has set enough before me for a plowman," I replied; after which, with a supreme effort, I fell to playing with the juicy morsels and concluded the ruin of my repast.

From this time there arose embarrassment between

us, though the old fare was continued, both unwilling to yield a particle in our lofty positions. But the thing came speedily to a head near the close of my month. Returning one day much sooner than usual from a walk, which I commonly took about five o'clock, I had occasion to go to Eddie's room, an apartment very near a small boudoir of his mother's. The door happened to be wide open. I looked, as yet unheard, and stood in astonishment, for the mystery of my lady anchorite's appetite was revealed. There she sat wallowing, I might say, in a steaming tray. A fat bird, a pile of toast, rich egg-plant, the early luxury of Florida, onions crisply fried, and, above all, a small bottle of champagne made up this solitary feast in which she was revelling with greasy contentment. I turned to escape unnoticed, but was too slow. She saw that she had been seen. In a day or two she handed me a check for my salary, with the comment that she feared we did not understand each other, a remark which, as it was uttered at the only time when we did understand each other, was, I conceive, entirely untrue.

CHAPTER XIII

A PRIVATE SECRETARY

I WAS not destined, after the loss of this place, to be long in want of another, for, during the last two days of my stay with Mrs. Johnson, seeing my impending dismissal, I had cast about for fresh employment. It had been my good luck to meet one afternoon at my late employer's a rich widow, who had asked me to find for her a secretary among my acquaintances, so it was soon my privilege to suggest myself. She accepted me after a little inquiry. I was allowed a hundred dollars a month.

My new employment was much superior to the old. I had little to do, and the family I was in was a cultivated one. To answer letters from persons asking aid, to keep small accounts, to collect rents and perform kindred duties not assigned to other persons employed by a considerable estate, these were the tasks which I had to discharge with little urgency. There were three children, who gave me little trouble, and who, had they done so, would have been reproved. Always received with cordiality, I was never encouraged by familiarity, and while I was never made to feel the contempt of service, I was not allowed to forget the obligations of employment.

Mrs. Oldworth was a woman of sense and dignity,

nor had either time or trouble soured the sweetness of her disposition. Her first marriage had been a miserable one. The greatest of misfortunes had been hers, to love devotedly one who had never been worthy of her love, but who had utterly deceived her and her family before the marriage, which in fact he had sought for no other object than money.

The fellow's base character was not revealed until a few months after the wedding, when he began a series of frolics with her inheritance. He soon went from bad to worse, the wife, for her part, steadfastly standing by him amid apologies, blushes and shame. The poor creature long tried to conceal her humiliation from the public, not knowing that the public, as usual, knew about most of his rascality before she did herself. In vain did she plead with him, in vain with tears and caresses show him the babe she had borne him, and with gentle acts of love endeavour to make attractive the home he disdained, desolate so long. Once she had shown temper, and then he knocked her down. For the child's sake she remained beneath the roof which custom called his, but she would no longer supply him with money. This drove him to theft of her jewels, which being soon consumed, he tore from her fingers the few that remained, the tokens of love and Christian wedlock.

During four vile years continued this hell, in which virtue and fidelity were trampled upon by falsehood and vice. Reconciliations were followed by partings, and partings by curses.

Then rose for the last time the spirit of the woman. She left the brute, her fortune squandered, her three children dependent upon her for support. She left him and strove during three years more to support, in a

most unequal struggle, the creatures of a baleful marriage into which she had been deceived, though it was contracted with every degree of human prudence and sanctified by her affections. Her health impaired, she found her children suffering not only for the advantages of education, but also for the necessities of existence. Then there appeared a kindly hearted fellow, who, seeing that the law would afford them opportunity for marriage, was never tempted to improper passion, either from his love or her misfortune. He proposed to take upon him the burdens of the other man's offspring as soon as she should become divorced.

As usual, the woman hesitated. Consulting the friends who had poorly assisted her in her poverty, though they had been gay in her riches, she was told by such of them as were happily married that it would be nobler to suffer. A good little Catholic priest, not being permitted himself to marry, reminded her that those whom God has joined together no man may put asunder, and when the outraged woman asked him if it were possible that God had had anything to do with that marriage and had joined her innocence to such a monster, the honest father exclaimed that if things had come to a pass when she would question Holy Writ, it was high time for her to look to her soul.

Then she had a talk with an Episcopal divine. Divorce, he said, could be tolerated, but not marriage by one divorced. She, on her side, reminded him of many good women who seemed to be both happy and useful in such remarriages, but the clergyman was clear that such unions were incestuous unless, at the next general assembly of the church, it should be voted otherwise. The balloting had been very close at the last meeting.

If five members could be induced to change their votes, it would be no sin at all. This year it was a very wicked thing.

A Presbyterian minister was at length found who believed that after such years of hardship a woman so mauled was entitled to bestow her virtues on a second household, averring it not improbable that some injustice had been done to Scripture, in the passage so often quoted, by making it too severe. He felt that no more had been intended by "no man put asunder" than to forbid men to divorce wives at their will, as in some countries they have ever had the privilege to do, "no man" being to that end equivalent to "the man," a construction assuredly more reasonable than many that are supported by the persistent habit of mankind.

At length becoming divorced, she married Oldworth, an honest and successful man, with whom, to the great disappointment of many good people, she lived in peace. She was provokingly happy, in point of fact, for she had learned to know what a good man was worth. She was now a widow by his death, with abundance of wealth; nor was Heaven apparently displeased with her. Rejoicing in the giving of alms, she would impartially enough bestow her money from time to time on the works of Catholic as well as Episcopalian divines. They accepted her wicked money, buying with it perhaps the wine which the one converted into the blood, the other into the symbol of the blood of Christ, and which both refused to her.

CHAPTER XIV

I BEHAVE BADLY

BEFORE I relate what followed in the happy employment I had fallen into, I must tell what I had seen of Lillian after my stay at Mrs. Johnson's. That painful month I had passed almost without a penny, so that my going to the theatre was out of the question, nor was it practicable for me to see her after the play, as she would commonly not return to her apartments until she had supped at one of the elegant cafés. To see her at such an hour and place was beyond both my purse and my situation, for I felt, without being told so, that I was expected to be indoors at a seasonable hour. Several times I had determined to see her in the afternoon, which was the time when I knew she was frequently to be seen, but, without exception, I found her in company. Without once having a word alone with her, I fell more deeply in love, if that were possible, than before.

He that loves a beauty generally makes her a character to fit her face. Had I not been infatuated, I could have seen already, even with no greater worldly experience than I had, that this lady was no angel. But I was utterly blind.

Being, upon my leaving Mrs. Johnson's, possessed of my month's salary, I first, like a fool, squandered several dollars upon flowers, and, hurrying to the play,

was again rewarded with what I deemed *my* glance. I even tried to go behind the scenes, a favour which probably my Dulcinea could have gotten for me, but which was denied me at every entrance as a privilege absolutely against the rules of the house. Only one thing really disquieted me, an undue warmth in the acting of Alden during several love-scenes between them. Try as I would, there was no way to see her alone, except as she should drive others away from her for my sake, a sacrifice I had no doubt she longed to make if she could, but which she never imposed upon herself.

Had I been able to see her frequently enough to render myself tedious, no doubt the beauty would have put an end to this sort of attention for her own sake. As it was, she suffered it to continue, for players are not easily fatigued by admiration, which, whether they enjoy it or not, it is a part of their business, and a degree of advertisement, to receive.

About the fourth night after my employment by Mrs. Oldworth I contrived, having a little money left, to follow Lillian's carriage to a café near the theatre, and, as if by accident, to saunter through the place as one casually dropping in for oysters and coffee. She was seated, as luck would have it, without an escort other than one of the women of her company, so, pretending to be surprised at falling in with her, I turned to her table at once.

"What a gay fellow you are!" she exclaimed. "Do you never go to bed?"

"Good heavens!" I replied. "I hope, Miss Lillian, you don't expect us fellows to go to bed with the chickens? The evening has just begun."

"It certainly has for me," said she, with a meaning look that delighted me.

Then I ordered supper, fool that I was. It was one of the most expensive restaurants in the city, a spacious as well as gilded hall, where the tables were, with much waste of space, set far apart in order that people of fashion might hate each other in comfort. Before I had given the orders, Alden, to my intense vexation, joined us in a manner that plainly showed me he was neither unexpected nor unwelcome.

My guests vowed they wanted only a bite. None of them cared for food at that time of night, so a few spoonfuls of soup with a salad would do unless, to be sure, I was about to eat something substantial myself, in which event they could be persuaded not to desert me.

"Well, we must do better than soup and salad," I cried. "Let us look over this bill-of-fare."

"Oh, the long thing," replied Lillian. "I never look at it; it confuses me worse than a dictionary or encyclopedia; just choose what you like, Mr. Cameron."

By this time it began to confuse me too abominably, for the figures opposite the dishes filled me with terror, and to say that I was helpless is to express mildly what I felt. Then the waiter, as is usual in the hesitation of selection, began to make suggestions that I perceived were costing me full half a dollar a word, since he did not leave off until he had forced me to order two canvas-back ducks, besides the soup and salad, oysters to begin with and cheese to conclude. To all this was added a bottle of wine. The bill would, it was clear, exceed my purse.

Any enjoyment of the meal was now beyond me.

Lillian, for her part, appeared quite ignorant of my state of mind, but I fancied that it was plain enough to Alden and that he had maliciously increased the number of dishes, a conclusion that rendered all the more provoking many little compliments he graciously paid me while regaling himself with the birds and champagne.

Mellow with liquor, he and Lillian exchanged many pleasantries. The fellow was, I imagined, conceited enough to fancy he stood well with her, so I detested him thoroughly with increasing irritation, the more so from a large glass of wine to which I was little accustomed.

"Upon my word, Mr. Cameron," he exclaimed, "you are making us very happy with this little supper, but, I assure you, what we enjoy most is the wit and conversation with which you have enlivened it."

This being too far from truth to be other than irony, as I had scarcely said half a dozen words up to that moment, I suffered, between jealousy and impecuniosity, an unhappy loss of temper.

"Mr. Alden," I replied, "you need not complete with a sarcasm the general unpleasantness of your attitude toward me this evening."

I could have cut my tongue out the moment I said this, for it is easy to imagine the situation that followed. For a minute nothing was said by any one, as they looked at each other in astonishment. Then Alden replied with an indifference, which, as it gave me no cause for anger and left me no justification by way of relation, as lawyers say, put me in a place where I had to remain in vexation, in order to have any apparent reason for the vexation with which I began.

"Really, Mr. Cameron," said he, "I thought I had been extremely civil this evening."

"Civil!" I cried. "I do not care for condescension, Mr. Alden."

"I beg your pardon, my dear young man," he began.

"I am no boy, sir," I said hotly, furious that he would give no cause for anger, ashamed of myself, and determined to be injured.

"Miss Lillian," he said, ignoring me, "I trust you will excuse me if I withdraw from this cheerful party. As to you, Mr. Cameron, you will pardon my not caring to make a scene."

"You never do on the stage," I retorted, with gross ill manners, but with great success in wounding him.

He rose hastily with an angry look and left us abruptly.

During this agreeable colloquy my fair guests, though evidently annoyed at my bad behaviour, had sat in silence, and as Alden had had a manifest victory over me in politeness, I saw that they were approving him as much as they condemned me. Indeed, it was quite plain that Lillian herself was out of humour.

They finished the meal with much loss of appetite, declared they must hurry home, and did not oblige me with more than a cold remark or two between three or four morsels after his departure. Then came the final misery of the evening. Calling for the account, I found I had not enough to pay it. Affecting great surprise at the small sum I had with me, I tried to treat the matter gaily; so, excusing myself from the table, I hurried to the cashier and contrived, with much humiliation, to get a credit until morning.

Treated with contempt by the waiter and with cold-

ness by the ladies, I finally separated from them at their carriage, relieved to hide my shame in my lodgings, where, bitterly upbraiding myself for jealousy, extravagance and pride, I lay awake until dawn.

Nor did I fail to curse the gluttony of fashionable life, reflecting that while few foods are pure enough for cattle, none seem too vile for man.

CHAPTER XV

CLOSER ACQUAINTANCES

THE virtues of those we hate displease us more than their vices. I was furious at Alden's behaviour because it had been so good, for this, it was clear, would commend him in the very quarter where I desired to see him degraded.

Ashamed to present myself with explanation, I now dispatched a note full of apologies to Lillian, only to receive a reply in which the lady, while she expressed the utmost forgiveness, begged that I see her for the present no more. Laying aside the coquette, she would, she said, be candid. If, by my attentions, I had honoured her even to myself with hopes of a more intimate relation and the honour of my name, it was, she grieved to say, a consummation impossible. Reasons not to be disclosed made it quite out of her power to consider me other than friend. But friend I could be, could I not? Just at present she could not permit even that, but later, when my mind should be more composed, I should see her as a friend.

Beside myself at all this, I went twice to her apartments at an hour when I was sure she was in, but received word from the servants that she desired to be excused. Still I would not desist. I wrote again. I sent flowers. I humbled my pride in abject appeals.

Obdurate she remained, however, until both spirit and reason told me to importune her no longer. But what was her reason? This tormented me as much as the loss itself.

No pain is equal to that of a lover in the first despair. My appetite fell off, my sleep was broken, and my memory ceased to respond to the most common suggestions. Indeed, my gentle employer, observing that something was wrong, felt herself obliged to offer me such vacation as I might require, pointing out with the utmost kindness many ways in which I could get rest and diversion. I longed to give her my confidence, but the vanity of man is too great to get sympathy by confessing rejected love, nor will any but the weakest voluntarily give the secret to another ear than the one that has received it in vain.

The butler in this house, it so happened, was the one who had been in service at Mrs. Johnson's during my late fast; so the fellow, making bold to have an occasional word with me in the room which I used as a sort of office, expressed a fear that I had not quite recovered from the poor fare she had served me. Evidently out of humour with Mrs. Johnson, he explained that he had left her because of a fit of her ill temper.

"You have my word for it, sir," said he, "I said not a thing in reply. Thank God! I haven't sunk so low as to have the last word in an argument with any lady or gentleman. A lady may curse me as much as she pleases. I never forget my profession, sir, which has been a great art to me these thirty years. Now, in this house, one can see for oneself. Mentioning no names, there is a great difference in people, sir. When a man has had to degrade himself by serving people no better

than himself, it is a great relief to be in good society again."

This creature, having conceived a regard for me, was especially solicitous to advance me with Betty, whose sudden interest in Mrs. Johnson had not deceived him. He had never failed to give me a hint of her coming, a service I am sure he had always done Betty in respect to me with the infinite tact of a trained servant. He now, as if by chance, observed that Miss Betty was below; adding, if a person in his position might be permitted respectfully to say so, that there wasn't another young gentlewoman on the Avenue fit to be mentioned the same breath with her.

Little interested though I was, I felt it pleasant to see Betty again. When I greeted her I expressed pleasure that she was among Mrs. Oldworth's friends, whereupon Betty, though she had probably not been in the house within a year, declared she had always felt for this lady a positive devotion. From this time I continued to see more of her than ever. Mrs. Oldworth, for her part, viewed the little affair with much indulgence, though she could not have been blind to Betty's feelings towards me and the worldly disadvantages of her entanglement.

This amiable, vivacious and comely girl, who now began to betray her affection for me, was not without some difficulty in so pleasant a business, and if my heart had not been so absorbed by the beautiful actress, there was everything in Betty's situation to excite my regard. To begin with, there was the opposition of parents, always a stimulant to love. I had not made three visits to her home, while at Mrs. Johnson's, before I felt that I was wanted there by neither father

nor mother, between whom indeed it would have been hard to decide in point of coolness. This, Betty endeavoured to conceal from me, admitting it reluctantly when at last I declined to visit her more. In consequence of my not going to her house, she was forced to come to mine, a practice that exhausted all her tact in preserving her dignity. A favourite expedient was a walk in the park on fine days, of which that winter we had a good many, with skating besides.

She now came to Mrs. Oldworth's with much frequency. Had Mrs. Oldworth seen this delightful new novel? Or, would Mrs. Oldworth lend her those pretty designs in embroidery? She scarcely knew what to do without Mrs. Oldworth's advice, whether drinking coffee shortened one's life or drinking water would give one early wrinkles.

Being a girl of real dignity, Betty was not without some scruples in deceiving, in a measure, her parents, though it was rarely necessary to make them any explanations wholly untrue. She quieted her conscience for some small evasions, however, saw me as often as she modestly could, and revelled in the hopes of successful love. For my own part, my mind was at ease as to any duty in the matter, for I had not the slightest designs upon her hand, and was not yet aware that already I possessed her heart.

CHAPTER XVI

BETTY'S ARGUMENT

THOUGH Betty's mother gave little attention to social matters, she was not without worldly sense, and, while she liked the company her daughter was in at the Oldworths', she could not fail to observe, during her own intercourse with that family, that Betty saw me a great deal. One day, while driving through the park, she happened to come upon us there, a circumstance which set her thinking in a very serious way about the possibility of an alliance by no means advantageous. Accordingly, the very next day she fell to questioning her daughter on this most embarrassing subject.

"Betty," she asked, "was that Mr. Cameron I saw you with in the park yesterday?"

"I believe it was."

"You believe it was?"

"Why, yes, mamma, of course. I was not paying close attention to what you were saying. Yes, Mr. Cameron."

"Why doesn't this young man come to our house?"

"Why should he come, mamma?"

"Why should he not come?" retorted the mother.

"I'm sure I don't know, mamma, why he should not."

"Do you mean to say, Betty, that you never asked him?"

"Never asked him?"

"Yes, I say, never asked him," repeated the mother, with growing impatience.

"Why should I ask him?" inquired Betty, guarding her secret with all the desperation of a maiden.

"Why should you not ask him?" cried the mother.

"Do you wish me to ask him, mamma?"

"No, I do not!" exclaimed Mrs. Sinclair, exasperated to have made so little progress.

"Then why should I ask him to come?" replied the daughter.

"This thing is putting me out of temper," said the mother. "You know, Betty, just as well as I do, what I mean. Why is it that a young man you see so often, if he had a right to see you at all, may walk with you in the park and never come to your home?"

"You never told me not to walk in the park with him."

"I never gave you any advice about him at all," responded the mother.

"Then why shouldn't I walk with him?"

"Now, Betty, I'll have to ask you to be less smart in this conversation."

"Why, mamma, what do you mean by being so out of humour with me?"

"Betty, I am trying to control myself. Beware, now. Is this young fellow in love with you?"

"He never told me so, mamma; and I'm sure I never asked him."

"Do you see him often?"

"No, not very."

"You saw him yesterday. Did you see him the day before?"

"I believe so."

"Did you see him the day before that?"

"Maybe so. I'm not sure. I can't remember every little thing, mamma."

"How did he come to work at Oldworth's?"

"I don't know that he *works* there at all, mamma. Mrs. Oldworth has had him as secretary for some time—I'm sure I don't know just how long. I'm not supposed to know everything about him. Mamma, what do you mean by cross-examining me in this way? What terrible thing have I ever done that I should be put on the witness-stand? And as for Mr. Cameron, I'm sure he comes of one of the oldest families in the State, for his mother was a Van Ruyn, and his uncle at Albany everybody knows, and he has been splendidly educated."

"You seem to know more about him than I thought," the mother said.

"Now, mamma; there you are, contradicting me again," cried Betty, driven at last to her only escape, a flood of tears.

"What do these penniless young fellows mean by this sort of thing?" cried Mrs. Sinclair, in a bad temper indeed.

"I don't know and I don't care," replied Betty, "for it's nobody's business but his own what he does, and he can go or stay where he pleases, so far as I care, except that he's a perfect gentleman, and all the ladies in our circle say so, and he's infinitely superior——"

Here there came another burst of tears, for the poor girl, afraid of having betrayed her secret; too proud of

the man she loved to let him be undefended, and at the same time alarmed at the prospect of being taken away from him, could find no other resource than a spasm of weeping. The mother, for her part, had the sense to leave her, but naturally began at once to make some plans of her own. What the good lady resolved on was to make no further comment, but within a fortnight to take the young woman to Europe upon no more notice than a day or two, with which in view she immediately and successfully consulted her husband.

In the midst of this I received one day a note from Maria Dole, requesting me to see her at a hotel immediately, repairing to which place, with much curiosity, I was conducted to the old devil's room. After some commonplaces she came to her subject.

"I suppose you know, Mr. Cameron," she began, with her icy smile, "that you are your uncle's heir?"

"I don't know it, Mrs. Dole," I replied, "and really don't think much about it."

"Well, young man, I won't flatter you by pretending to believe you, for I shall simply rely on your protecting yourself as a man of business after what I am going to say."

Here she paused until I could not refrain from asking her to proceed.

"Mr. Cameron, if you don't interfere there'll either be no fortune of your uncle's to inherit, or somebody else will get all that she doesn't squander for him in his lifetime."

I said nothing; so she went on.

"There's a play actress in this town, and you know her. Your uncle's lost his head over her; she's fasci-

nated him like a snake. It's your money she's consuming. Can't you stop it? Have you no spirit?"

"Mrs. Dole," I replied, "if my uncle wishes to marry——"

"Marry?" she cried, springing to her feet and then dropping back into the chair, white with rage. "Marry! Well, maybe he's fool enough for that." Then, fresh malice coming into her heart, she added, "But maybe he'll not find that necessary, with that kind of woman."

"You old hag!" I exclaimed, "stop, or I'll throw you out of the window."

With this I left the room, wondering later which of these ladies was to have the pleasure of spending my money.

CHAPTER XVII

TRIXY GORDON APPEARS.

THE studies of youth become a part of our minds, while those of age serve only to embellish them. In my depression over the loss of Lillian I now, in every leisure moment, applied myself to books, and, as I had no exacting employment, I was able to make good use of the excellent library of the Oldworths. Two months passing in this way, I acquired by degrees considerable composure. Affection by no means expelled from my breast was at least under my control, and after a while her face ceased to come between my eyes and the printed page. No doubt I should, after the manner of youth, have made even a speedier conquest of these emotions, if nearly every newspaper or magazine had not contained her praises, if the company into which I was thrown had not continually discussed her, and if the windows and billboards had not exhibited her charms.

While I was in this condition the month of April came round, bringing some new people upon the scene, people of whom I had heard a good deal during the winter, but had seen nothing. These were a sister of the deceased Oldworth and the husband of that sister, a couple with more money than common sense, and admirably fitted to make trouble for themselves, as well

as everybody else, wherever they might happen to go. They had just returned from Florida.

The woman's name was Trixy, the husband's Richard, but in fashionable circles they were generally known as the "Trixy Gordons," from the superior folly of the wife. That lady was one of those frivolous spouses who can giggle or weep with equal ease and with equally little reason. Indefatigably busy in all affairs of fashion, she had a social position that made even wise people, who really did not care to know her, desire every one else to believe they knew her well, and, being spoiled by all, including her husband, she was always sure to have her own way. Nobody had yet caught her in anything scandalous, but there was a general hope that the worst would happen. Her beauty was of a sort that made all the other women distrust her with their husbands, nor was there any one of these within her circle who had not some time or other been upon oath to his wife that the little fool bored him.

Trixy was then about twenty-five, of medium height, girlish figure and a somewhat saucy expression, which is very pleasing in a maiden, but in a matron liable to suggest naughty things, for you could see at a glance that there was nothing in her head, that she must constantly find amusement or excitement, that, towards the close of a weary day, it was best for her health to have something sparkling to drink, and that, upon advice of a physician, she always slept best after a bird and a bottle.

But nothing could exceed the innocent demeanour of this harmless person, who could, even under the most dubious circumstances, defy conviction with a babelike expression superior to that of any of the ox-eyed queens

of Homer. To this she added no small art in complimenting the women themselves, the most suspicious of whom were sure to remark, having had a chat with her, that, after all, Trixy meant well and was an enemy to nobody but herself. Her innocence appeared heightened by that practice of exaggeration in which our women too much indulge and which was carried by her to such a degree that, until one knew her well, it was impossible to estimate what number or quantity or extreme she actually had in mind, for with her whatever was good was perfectly delightful, whatever was bad was absolutely horrible, and in describing numbers she had no unit less than a million. After some experience you could reckon a little on the degree she intended by noting, as in the Chinese tongue, the varieties of stress, accent, and inflection.

Equally a fool was the husband, who instantly suggested to you that line of Pope's, "when husbands or when lap-dogs breathe their last." Utterly without anything to do, except to spend an ample income, this insipid fellow passed his time in the invention of trifling or singular amusements, eccentricities of dress, yachts, dogs, horses. Then he would affect wits and the arts; then have a fever for business and men of affairs. In short, he could be described only by the other great satirist—

"Blest madman who could every hour employ
With something new to wish and to enjoy."

The pair managed, however, to get on without quarrels, since each was willing to let the other alone, and, there being, as the saying is, no love lost between them, neither was so far bent on having the other's company

as to find fault with the whims or amusements that frequently kept them apart.

This pretty couple I have described at some length, because I was very soon in their affairs to my great pleasure, profit, and ultimate mortification.

CHAPTER XVIII

AN UNPLEASANT MEETING

MEANWHILE my mind ran considerably on my uncle's fortune, which I might have been more indifferent to, if I had not been sure that either one woman or the other was conspiring to keep me out of it. I say both, for there were many circumstances against Lillian, generous and amiable though she was. As for Maria Dole, her remark about my being my uncle's heir was plainly a lie to stimulate me to save the fortune from Lillian, so that Maria could steal it herself.

Pretty curious, as may be imagined, I was glad to stumble on my uncle one evening in the lobby of a fashionable hotel. At first he was about to pass me with a cool nod, but, changing his mind, requested me to step aside near a window, as he had a word to say to me.

"Young man," he said, "it occurs to me to give you a bit of advice. Just let my affairs alone, will you? I believe I don't meddle in yours."

"What do you mean?" I exclaimed. "I——"

"Now, don't make a scene, my young Adonis," he continued, with a sneer. "I have said all I have to say. As for anything I have in this world, just drop your expectations. Not one penny of mine will ever go to you."

He turned aside, but not until I had recovered enough composure to resolve on treating him as caustically as he had treated me.

"Oh," said I, with a smile, "you'll see me dead, for that matter, a half a century. You've got what Fontenelle called the recipe for a green old age—a sound body and a selfish heart.

"You're very classic, you young adventurer, with your Fontenelles and your smoothly rounded periods. I suppose you've been carrying that one about with you a month, looking for a chance to shoot it off. But, remember what I say. Let my affairs alone."

Thus I was glad to part company with him, and I must now recur to some relations of mine with Mrs. Gordon.

The fair Trixy, having her house near by, met me almost immediately on her arrival, introduced by Mrs. Oldworth with no more point made of it than became my situation. With my mind on other things, I gave the lady a respectful bow, said something polite, and expected only her casual good nature.

Such, however, was not to be the end of our acquaintance. Quick as was her first glance, it disclosed that she thought me not entirely beneath her notice, and, as she had occasion to be in the house almost daily, I was favoured with a very pleasant look every time we met. To this I paid no more attention than, feeling grateful for it, to give it a pleasant return. Nor was I conceited enough to deem significant what was done by her in the most candid and artless manner imaginable.

Within a week she had occasion to chat with me about some trifle, pretty soon desired information about a bit of business, and finally declared to Mrs. Oldworth

that I could be very useful to the Gordons upon occasion if I could only be permitted now and then to do them a turn. This being quite satisfactory to my employer, I soon found myself consulted on a number of things of small consequence, the balancing of her bank account, a quarrel over a milliner's bill, the purchase of a horse, and the curing of a sick dog, all which matters were such, she explained, as ladies cared to discuss only with very discreet persons, friends of the family.

Frivolous as this dame was, she had sufficient sense of the difference in our stations to let herself down to mine by degrees. For my own part, I was slow to see in her behaviour anything but what was proper enough, and I bore myself towards her not indifferently, but with nothing more than respectful friendliness.

I had yet to learn that spoiled beauties often have headstrong fancies, which are never more unreasonable than when the object is both improper and unwilling. The very indifference she perceived in me being something new, was something to be conquered. Add to this the fact that she considered me handsome.

It is not to be forgotten that the people I was among knew my family to be an old one in the State, and that I was entitled to all the courtesies of a gentleman, which being so, it was not difficult to the simple Trixy to bring me into many small parties. These by degrees became more frequent, until, one night at the close of the opera season, I was invited to a seat in the family box. I had by this time received some increase in salary, was no longer sending flowers to a goddess behind the footlights, and was sufficiently clothed for such occasions.

CHAPTER XIX

A NAUGHTY EVENING

THE opera was *Tannhäuser*, in which the genius of song first declared its emancipation from the soft passions of the South, and, disdaining the frivolous measures, along with the melodious airs of Italy, celebrated in the Northern forests a marriage of moral precept to ravishing, exalted harmony. Alone in the box during the overture, I listened with enchantment to strains which, to use the language of Milton, might create a soul under the ribs of death. I sighed at the grief of Elizabeth. I mourned over the punishment of Tannhäuser. I felt myself borne above every earthly consideration in the song that rose to heaven from the melancholy soul of Wolfram.

From reflections of this sort I was soon roused by the arrival of Mrs. Oldworth with her two guests, and afterwards by Trixy, who, coming upon us during the first act, accounted for her tardiness by a funeral and a card party. She needed no excuses, for it was commonly understood that she came late to make a stir with her beauty and her diamonds, a conclusion undoubtedly as satisfactory to her as one more complimentary, since people cannot find fault without taking notice.

The uncommon beauty of this young leader of fash-

ion soon caused the glasses of half the house to turn towards our box, so I shared, and was young enough to enjoy, her prominence. As for the music, she vowed it was heavenly while studying a costume in another box, and declared there never could be a second Wagner while bowing to a friend across the house.

Conversation now became common in the box, some one relating a terrible accident in which a player had once been stabbed to death with a dagger, which, instead of being an imitation, designed to fold itself in the stroke, had proved a real weapon and had pierced his heart.

"Good heavens!" cried Trixy. "How surprised the man must have been to be killed in that way!"

The opera being thus robbed of its illusions, I realised the sneer of Voltaire that, whenever men find a thing too stupid to be spoken, they sing it, and soon was able to smile, when the diva's train, catching by accident in the scenery, dragged about a field of forest and an impregnable castle. Trixy's husband having failed to come, I was in conversation with her nearly all the evening, and was told by her that I should accompany her to her home.

The play being finished, we repaired for supper to a restaurant, where Trixy at once became exceedingly gay. The day, she said, had been a great strain upon her nerves. She had really suffered at the funeral, nor would she have thought of going to the thing if everybody else had not been there. Then she called for Berncasteler Doctor, to drink it with her oysters.

While she was at her height, and myself in good spirits, we were in a manner interrupted by the arrival of a party at the next table. Looking up, I was in-

stantly silent. There was Lillian, every eye in the room upon her, and dazzling every eye with her beauty. Not failing to perceive me, as well as the distinguished little company I was in, she gave me a very sweet bow.

There was no mistaking the effect of this interruption upon me. I had stopped in the middle of a sentence, red and quite disturbed. Trixy saw this.

"Do you know that woman?" she inquired.

"Yes," I replied; "yes, somewhat."

"Strange I never heard you mention her if you are so intimate as that," said she, a trifle displeased.

"I don't see why you call it intimacy," I replied, "for I didn't say that by any means."

"Well, of course, you wanted it to be intimacy," she retorted, half petulantly; "it is always so between men and actresses."

This agreeable colloquy escaped the hearing of Mrs. Oldworth, as the fair Trixy, by her own contrivance, was seated beside me. However, my acquaintance with Lillian became manifest to all when the beautiful actress, perceiving in a little while the annoyance of Trixy, favoured me with two or three flattering glances. Mrs. Oldworth was satisfied with my remarking that I had had the pleasure of meeting Miss Evanson and reproved Trixy for saying that the actress was behaving with shocking rudeness.

You may imagine that by this time I was not a little puzzled at Trixy's behaviour, which, however, did not fill my mind entirely, because I could hardly take my eyes off Lillian. Finally we left the room. Bidding the others good-night, I got into the pretty Gordon's carriage, where my first remarks were received in silence.

"I hope, Mrs. Gordon," I began, "that nothing I have done has given offence."

"Was ever a lady so rudely treated by her escort as I," replied she, "subjected to a flirtation from one table to another?"

"Upon my word, Mrs. Gordon," I exclaimed, "you do me an injustice, and Miss Evanson, too."

"Don't defend that woman to me," cried the lady; "you may be as much in love with her as you please, though little good that will do you, from what the whole town knows about her and Harry Alden."

"But, Mrs. Gordon——"

"There, you don't deny it," she went on. "Now admit it, you are slavishly, head and heels in love with Lillian Evanson."

Of course I denied, of course she reiterated, the charge. Finally, it becoming my turn to be hurt, I declared it was easy for me to rid her of my company, if she so preferred, as well as to spare her in that respect for the future. This finally succeeding, she protested that no woman on earth was so loyal as herself in friendship, which in fact she could with difficulty avoid calling by a tenderer name. This afforded me an opportunity to take her hand. I vowed that with me, friendship was equally supreme. Life was not worth living without friendship, and where could friendship be so pure, so elevating, as between man and woman? Where so refined as between a lady and a gentleman? Where so natural as between her and me?

To all this, Trixy assented without withdrawing her hand. What she needed was somebody she could safely trust. Her nature was confiding. Upon me she felt

she could lean. Her husband, with his thousand amusements, had left a great loneliness in her heart, which yearned for sympathy. She felt better now.

It is quite plain that the least a gentleman can do for a suffering lady under these circumstances is to give her a kiss, but such was my fear of making a mistake where I had so much to lose, that I remained a very cool Adonis to the last, pressing her hand, though with warmth enough to show her that she had found that pure, sweet, pastoral friendship she had so long been seeking.

By this time we were at her house, and the footman at the carriage door. I bade her good-night, but perceived in her voice that all was not satisfactory, and that sympathy has a great thirst. Such proved the case, for I had walked scarcely half a dozen steps away when I found myself gently recalled and requested to come in for a moment or two, to hear something she desired particularly to say.

It is to be borne in mind that it was now about one o'clock, a pretty hour for me to be taken indoors by a handsome young matron. So it was not without some sense of adventure that, the man being dismissed, I consented to be seated in a dimly lighted anteroom. After some hesitation she said:

“I’m afraid, Mr. Cameron, I’m afraid you don’t quite under—that you have misunderstood me.”

“By no means,” I cried. “Nothing could be plainer—I mean, of course, nothing clearer than that I am honoured with your friendship.”

“No, you don’t quite understand yet.”

“Good heavens! Mrs. Gordon, can it be possible that I can hope for a higher regard?”

"But if I should admit that, then you would misunderstand me."

"You mean that it could not possibly be true even if you should admit it?"

"How hard it is to make you see my meaning," she replied. "What I feel for you is more than friendship, but you men are so bad that you are going to misunderstand the purity of it all."

"Purity, Mrs. Gordon!" I exclaimed.

"Oh, call me Trixy," she sighed.

By this time I had all this purity in my arms, smothering her with kisses by way of making it clear that I appreciated purity. At this very moment, though, we heard a step in the hall. Disentangling ourselves from our caresses, we had scarcely time to accomplish a respectable separation, when we were confronted by her husband. He had just himself come home, a little under the weather, as the saying is, but not too full to think the situation less than queer, to such a degree that, even in that light, we could see trouble brewing in his head. For my own part, I began to feel alarm.

Then it was that his artless spouse conceived a master stroke.

"You're home at last, are you? Aren't you ashamed to treat me this way?" she cried.

He lacked words for a moment, so she poured in fresh forces.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself, Dick Gordon? You know I expected you at the play, and here I am forced to make Mr. Cameron stay up all night to see me home. Don't come near me, now. Don't say a word. I've stood this thing as long as I can. I'm tired of it."

In a few minutes he was offering apologies, begging

the wrathful Trixy to be reasonable, and calling me to witness the exasperating character of men's engagements which so often defeat the enjoyments of life by one's own fireside, to all of which I, with proper hypocrisy, acceded, earnestly interceding with the lady, who, as I finally departed, had the goodness to tell Dick that she would *try to forgive* him.

As I left her she accompanied me part of the way to the door, adding in my ear that she was sorry she had lost her dignity by noticing such a creature as Lillian.

"Such persons," she concluded haughtily, "are unspeakably common."

CHAPTER XX

TRIXY'S HUSBAND

IT is truth unqualified that no man ever did a thing so laudable but somebody questioned his motives, and that no act was ever so damnable but somebody arose to defend it. This reflection, which the reader may imagine has to do with my conduct or that of Trixy just related, comes, on the contrary, from that of her husband, whose name, instead of our own, was the next morning in everybody's mouth.

It appears that this gentleman had taken a party of men aboard his yacht the day before, to give it the first trial of the season, and, by way of making merry, had imposed upon each guest the duty of bringing with him some four-legged animal, who should be deemed also a guest and earn repast by some kind of antic. Of course this folly presupposed unlimited wine, an expectation fully gratified. A sheep, an ass, a pony, and other honest brutes were forced with shamed faces to strut or gambol before inferior men, to the infinite delight of the latter in their revels. The fun reached its height when the right of one of the guests to be represented by a monkey was challenged, on the ground that this was really no four-legged animal at all, but, in truth, a man like the rest of the company, with two good arms. This discussion waxing warm, amid the

popping of corks, it was decided to hold formal argument, with opening and closing speeches on either side. The result of it all was that the monkey, after listening very thoughtfully for a time to one or two of the orators, made his escape to the galley, where the cook fed him so inordinately that, before sentence was arrived at on the upper deck, the little beast was in his final convulsions below.

After much parley, both angry and good-natured, it was decided to inter the monkey with all the honours, and according to the ceremony of the seas, for which purpose a book of prayer, by some extraordinary chance discovered aboard, was produced and the tipsy company assembled on deck. Then the animal, wrapped in an American flag, was lowered into the sea, with an imitation of both naval and religious rites, amid doleful chants, wails from tin horns, and blasts from a trumpet or two.

Now, all this occurring in the bay of New York in broad daylight, the din of it, together with the crowd on the deck, caused two or three small craft to lie to where they could watch it. This having done to their content or disgust, they reported it in town, with the name of the yacht, so, as usual, it soon spread to the newspapers.

The public prints, wanting nothing better than the follies of the rich, now revelled, and, one might say, wallowed in this contemptible orgy not surpassed by the rotten frolics of Capri. Long accounts described the affair from beginning to end. One journal boasted that, having caught wind of this debauch, it had secreted a reporter on the yacht, by which means it was able to give a circumstantial account of the whole. Pic-

tures were exhibited of the yacht, of Gordon's house, his wife, and the monkey. Nay, more, there were photographs of the monkey's parents in the museum, and even of that part of Africa in which they had been captured years before.

The town, having laughed in the morning, became indignant by noon, but, as usual, divided about the blame. At the clubs some contended that Dick should be well whipped, others that a fellow with such a fool for a wife might be pardoned in anything. To this it was replied that he, for his part, had lost nothing by the bargain; the least he could do was to be decent. A few, growing philosophic, declared the affair was an inevitable consequence of our way of living nowadays. The tariff was the cause of it all, by creating great fortunes. The country was going to hell, whether or no. A small number defended the whole affair, the religious mockery being to these a harmless mummery, the monkey as happy dead as alive, and the drinking no worse than occurred every night at some club or other in town.

As for the women, these declared that, while it was very disgraceful, still poor Dick, having no home life, must be treated kindly by public opinion, and they hoped so shocking a thing would prove a useful lesson to his wife. In short, nobody could talk of anything else in fashionable life that day, and the affair was such a godsend to gossips that one might suppose they would have felt grateful to both the Gordons.

Hardly was I out of bed before I was called by telephone to Mrs. Oldworth, who, expressing her intense mortification at what she denounced a blasphemous performance, informed me that, with part of the household, she would take the evening train to her country

place. For the first time she commented to me on her family relations. Trixy, she said, was, as I could see myself, a trying young person. She would not scold her or say which was to blame for a good deal of folly, but she could advise neither of them again.

With that she dispatched me on the mid-day train to see that the servants, who had already gone, carried out her orders. For my part, I was glad to leave town even for a day. My scene with Trixy filled me with disgust. By no means a saint, I was also by no means a sinner. The world had not yet weakened the virtues natural to proper rearing, and I felt obligations to Mrs. Oldworth even in this part of her connections.

Before I left my lodgings I found a note from Trixy, advising me that she must see me without a moment's delay. From this, concluding no more than that she again felt herself misunderstood, I hurried her a cordial, yet safe, reply that I was on the way to the train. I was worried by this behaviour of hers, but could only hope, from the levity of her mind, that what had been conceived in folly would be cast aside out of whim.

The seeming caprice of fine ladies proceeds often from more diversity of taste than fashion permits their sex to betray. Our own has a privilege to avow a vigorous as well as a dainty palate, but it would be manifestly improper for a lady to be as frank as Lord Foppington in the old play, who, relishing variety in his fare, vowed he thought just as much of his wife's maid as any ortolan duchess in Christendom.

CHAPTER XXI

LILLIAN AND I RESUME

IT was clear, after my exchange of glances with Lillian in the restaurant, both that she was in good humour with me and that I, for my part, could be with her again without making a fool of myself, so, being resolved to get some insight into my uncle's entanglement, I ventured to visit her before going to the country.

"Well, brother Charles," said she, with a laugh, "what now?"

"Nothing, sister Lillian," I replied, "except the pleasure of seeing my future aunt."

Upon this we became merry, sipped glasses of wine, and vowed there was nothing so sensible as friendship, during all which I pleasantly teased her about my uncle.

"I declare," cried she, "your uncle is no more to me than are a dozen other men you see about me. In fact, I'm probably not so much to him as his housekeeper. What do you know about that woman?"

As I could tell her little, I found she was full of curiosity impossible to be concealed, each of us intimating that Maria would stop at nothing, but that, as she had some kind of claim upon my uncle of none too dainty a sort, it was something nobody could meddle with.

"Besides which," added Lillian, "I really care nothing about it at all."

Willing to believe her, I gave up trying to discover what were her relations with the old millionaire, satisfied to be on good terms with one who was not only big-hearted and good-natured, but who might be able either to serve or injure me in a most important quarter.

She was in the highest spirits that day, and it was a sight to see her playfulness.

"What a house I had last night!" she cried. "I did with them whatever I pleased. I made every man, woman and child do just what I wished. Oh, I love them! They're my babies, my babies—do you hear, Master Charles?—my babies, every one of them!"

Here she fell to chasing me about the room while pelting me, in sheer animal spirits, with muffs, fans and gloves.

"Babies!" I replied. "Lord! Lillian, you should have been married and had real babies long ago."

"Oh, the poor brats," she answered, "don't wish them such a fate, wicked girl that I am. The people are my babies, do you hear—do you hear? Aren't you glad you're not in love with me any more, eh, pretty Charlie? But you're a dear, and it's better this way. Oh, my conscience! I must send for Kitty Riley and console her for that bad light last night. I gave her the best position in the scene, worth a hundred dollars a minute to the poor thing in such a house, but the provoking man with the light gave it nearly all to me. I know she's broken-hearted, for her best lines fell flat."

I wondered how I could behold all her loveliness in this captivating mood of hers without relapsing into my old infatuation, for she was like life blown into one of those eighteenth-century canvases, where painters

have striven to give to posterity some notion of the refined, the voluptuous charms of blooming Georgiana.

In the midst of this humour, suddenly becoming a trifle serious, and laying her hand upon my shoulder, she said:

"Charles, I told you a fib the other day, and don't feel right about it. I told you your uncle had only met me a week or two before. That isn't quite true. I've known him considerably longer, Charles, but was ashamed to let so young a man as you know that I allowed gray-headed fellows to run after me." Then, being silent for a moment, as she seated herself, she added: "I'm sure you'll have confidence in me, for I do want your friendship. I've done things in life I regret, but I'm going to stop it. Yesterday I rejected a new play that looks like a popular thing—a moral lesson, I suppose they'd call it, but none of it for me. I'll not allow my house to be filled with good women and then show them the triumphs of a rotten wife."

CHAPTER XXII

LILLIAN'S FATHER

AT this moment there was a gentle tap on the door and the colour came to her cheeks with joy.

"It's my father," she cried. "Ah, there you are, father. Here, dear, this is Mr. Cameron, one of our friends."

"Glad to meet you, suh," said a genial old gentleman, whose face was most kindly, and whom the daughter plainly resembled.

"You are from the South," I remarked.

"Knew it by the accent? Well, suh, I certainly didn't know I had any left. Yes, suh; yes, I'm a Southerner, suh. My little girl here, too, though I reckon she's dropped a heap of our way of talking, eh, Lillian?"

"I'm sorry, if I have," she replied, surveying him with fondness while she made him comfortable.

"The South is proud of you, anyway. Yes, suh, proud of you. My little girl's at the top here, Mr. Cameron. You're not one of the Virginia Camerons, distant cousins of mine, suh?"

"I fear not, sir," I replied.

"Well, you needn't regret it so very much, after all," he continued. "Things are not growing more agreeable there, Mr. Cameron. Yes, daughter, a glass of port. I don't regret my little woman's living here, now

that most of our conservative friends and relatives down there have accepted her going on the stage. For my part, though, I reckon I never can learn to like this cold-blooded town, suh, so I've given it up. Mostly in Washington City, suh."

Nothing could exceed Lillian's tenderness to the affectionate old man. As we talked I recurred to his remark concerning one's being well off to be out of the South.

"I suppose," said I, "you have the negroes in mind. That's all right now, isn't it? You have them under control?"

"Oh, yes, yes," he replied, "under control. Lord! suh, we can *control* 'em, but we're getting tired of controlling."

"But they're becoming educated. That will cure the whole trouble in time."

"I suppose," he answered, half-wearily, "that it's no use, Mr. Cameron, trying to make this clear to a Northerner. The education of them begins a new evil. Mr. Cameron, suh, how would one of your friends on Fifth Avenue in this city like to have two or three rich, educated niggers buy houses on either side of him? How would he like to see big negro girls in flaring costumes get in and out of carriages beside his own door? How would you like to have your sister sandwiched between two of 'em at a *matinée*?"

I shook my head; so he went on.

"Now, suh, that we've been able to prevent down there to date. But, my God! suh, they're breeding like rabbits, and, of course, if they're ever going to be rich and educated—— Well, I don't see how the same soil will hold us both."

Here he paced the floor.

"Mr. Cameron, ask some man from Cincinnati or Chicago whether property ain't being ruined, suh, in white neighbourhoods there when rich niggers buy residences next door. There's a hundred thousand niggers there, I'm told—in Chicago already. It's coming home to the North, too."

As I bade him good-day, Lillian led me to the door.

"How I love him!" she said. "It would be better for me, I'm sure, if he lived here always, but it's inconvenient and it's asking too much to take him away from all his Southern friends."

CHAPTER XXIII

IN THE COUNTRY

MRS. OLDWORTH'S country place was situated in the Berkshires, where the Housatonic winds near pleasant Lenoxdale. The tulips, the daffodils, the wall-flowers, the trees in early bloom, and every blade of grass seemed to welcome returning May. From the terrace I gazed long upon a landscape in which hamlets and fair estates appear and disappear amid the gentle disorder of the hills. Just before me the lawn, in a lazy wave, lost itself in thicket and grove by a sweet stratagem that beguiled the eye. What was near seemed distant; what was artificial, wild. The brook, the pool, the grassy bank made of it all a sylvan scene.

Spring, to many the season of melancholy, now affected me with some sadness; so it was a relief, after my tasks were dispatched, to meet Mrs. Oldworth and her children at the train. It was also an agreeable surprise to find she had brought Betty. Indeed, I could no longer quite avoid the conclusion that the good woman had a purpose quite friendly to me. In this I was encouraged by her expressing a desire that I remain two or three days, as she had other guests coming the next day, and these I could help her entertain.

By the next noon there arrived a prominent physician and a United States Senator, with their wives.

The physician was one of those who make a fortune in fashionable circles. Becoming friendly with me, he soon fell to discussing his profession, which, he said, quite burdened him with work. All sorts of new maladies were discovered nowadays, and for his part he preferred the knife. There was much more certainty in cutting. He referred to his having taken out and examined some of the most aristocratic livers and kidneys in town. He would not, he said, mention names, a thing quite forbidden by the rules of his calling, but, if he had a mind, he could tell me startling things concerning the insides of our millionaires. As for our best ladies, most of whom were his patients, very few cared any longer to go about entire.

The Senator, Baxom by name, was a statesman from the West, where he had amassed a large fortune. Though the houses were in session, he had come to New York to spend a few days, a brisk and cheery old sinner, knowing nothing about public affairs, wholly intent on gain, and, without being bad-hearted, ready for any scheme that promised money. However, there was no one more respected, for he often talked loudly of our great country's honour, often gave to charity with a liberal hand, and was clever in pleasing editors. A large, stout man, he had that bulk which our people love to see in their public representatives, selfishness, shrewdness and much good-nature appearing in him all the while; a sort of person, in short, commonly seen in American public life. He abounded in practical good sense, and, with all his faults, he would not have been unwilling to shed his blood for his country.

The physician's wife was that rare monster, a silent woman. The silent are the spies of social intercourse.

Those who rarely have anything to say, advance not on their own invention, but on that of the frank, whose ideas they adopt and whose errors they cunningly avoid. Real brightness, on the other hand, hurries to expression, and while many fools talk too much, inventive minds delight in communication. Yet, the silent more commonly please because they convey to every one the impression of agreeing. In addition to silence, the doctor's wife had the unpardonable vice of a large nose, and all thoughtful men are agreed that the species of big-nosed women should be exterminated.

The Senator's wife, just the opposite of the doctor's, was a lively talker, who frequently flattered, but in such a way that, though you knew it was flattery, you were willing to swallow more, since she never made it gross enough to spoil digestion.

Good opportunity occurring, I took a long walk with Betty, who, having read the scandal about Gordon's frolic, inquired whether Mrs. Oldworth was not deeply annoyed, that lady having been apparently in no happy humour on the way down from New York.

"It is the most awful thing I ever heard of," said Betty; "and I suppose Trixy is feeling even worse."

"I think she will get over it," I replied.

"Poor thing," exclaimed Betty, "the women are all censuring her, but, for my part, if I were a married woman in her place, I should feel myself entitled to sympathy. Of course she loves her husband. She wouldn't be married to him if she didn't. At any rate, I should certainly love a man very much if I were married to him, not that it makes any difference as to what I would do, as I made up my mind long ago never to

marry at all, and never would think of considering such a thing."

This fable I pretended to accept, though, as she was plainly made by nature for motherhood, she had already begun to think of little else. States rose and fell, but Betty knew the vicissitudes of her neighbours' babies, the politics of domestic life, and the administration of nurseries.

We finally talked of my future. Fame, I said, was the only object for which a man should live, fame to be achieved by untiring toil.

"And so I say, too," cried Betty. "I long to be a man myself and strive for such things."

"It is a hard career," said I, "but the delight of it all is a sufficient reward."

"I should think it would be," replied she, "to have all the world talking about one."

"No matter for the reputation, Miss Betty," I observed, with great philosophy; "it is only the glory of elevating one's art that satisfies the true love of fame. Think of it, to dedicate days and nights to the refinement of a few fine passages in prose or verse, to destroy in disgust what it has taken hours to create and what you know the less fastidious public would be glad to accept, only to create anew——"

"Oh!" exclaimed Betty, "it is grand to hear a man talk like that! There is nothing like fame."

"The long, patient struggle through poverty and obscurity," I continued, "the indifference to companionship and the happy home, this is the price of fame."

"I fear," said Betty, "the wife of such a man would have a hard time."

"Wife!" I exclaimed. "The true seeker after fame, the true student of an art, has no time for marriage."

"Now, I think that's very odd, to say the least," replied Betty, in a different tone. "Why are women always to be left out of anything that's fine?"

"Oh, Miss Betty, how can such a man spare time——"

"Well, he needn't be quite so crazy about it, need he?" retorted Betty; "not that anybody would object or care if he did, but why should he?"

"Impossible!" I replied. "He must forego paradise itself if it interferes with his losing himself body and soul in his work. He must spurn delights and live laborious days."

"Well, I'm glad," replied the irritated maiden, "that I never did approve of fame. What good does this fame do any one, I should like to know? Why should a man kill himself to be talked of by people he never expects to see?"

At this juncture we were turning a corner on the roadway, when we met the butler returning from the station, whereupon the ruffled Betty seemed willing to have other company.

"Thomas," said she to the butler, "I see some ladies and gentlemen down the road, so you must have passed them. Are they friends of ours?"

"I think not, ma'am. In fact, I'm quite sure, as they were laughing and talking a great deal."

"What do you mean, Thomas? Can't our friends do that?"

"Meaning it with great respect, ma'am, I hardly think any of our best people would ever let any one see them as happy as that."

"Then let us return to the house, Mr. Cameron," said Betty, who on the way back had two or three moods of irritation and of affected gaiety. It was impossible to look upon her and not see how sweet it was to be good.

CHAPTER XXIV

SENATOR BAXOM

THAT afternoon there visited the house, from a neighbouring estate, Mr. Reginald Catesby and his sister, the Countess Chateauroux. The brother was a good-looking fopling, who had already squandered the best part of his inheritance, was now in search of an heiress, and was utterly worthless at cards, at races, or in business. With difficulty he kept up an extravagant sort of life, including membership of those select clubs, in which, even when you happen to meet a scoundrel, you have the comfort of knowing that he must be a gentleman. The Countess with her share of the father's fortune had bought one of the best noblemen in the market, nor had she fared altogether badly, as the fellow had not cursed her within the first month, had not filched her jewels before the second, and had not mauled her until just before the birth of her child. They were separated now, as, her money being nearly exhausted, the Count found her no longer worth beating.

It is impossible to avoid some gloomy predictions concerning a people who annually expend in pleasure abroad more than one hundred millions. This sum, the least that either apprehension or optimism has ever conceded to our European travel, aggregates in two

decades the appalling amount of two billions of dollars. Were this spent in exchange for commodities the transfer of values might well console us. But it is, in a sense, squandered upon the servants, the restaurants, the railways, and the inns of foreign countries, most of which buy from us few of the necessities, and none of the luxuries, of existence. To supply this woeful drain (increasing constantly through foreign marriages and domiciles abroad), the soils once virgin contribute a declining harvest, whilst mines are becoming exhausted and noble forests have already been consumed.

Catesby at once addressed himself to Betty, then in the humour to receive attentions that might serve to show her independent of mine, but the honest girl, unused to artifice, could not avoid betraying how much she made a point of it; for, as Erasmus says in one of his colloquies, the soul is not where it *respires*, but where it *aspires*.

Meanwhile, I thought it wise to talk much with the Senator. I had an itch for political, as well as literary, honours, so I deemed it good use of my time to make a deep impression on this statesman. Indeed, I fancied I had already made some such impression, a conclusion quite pardonable in me, as no one else had ever met him without fancying the same thing.

"We need young men like you in the public service, Mr. Cameron," said the Senator, thoughtfully. "You must not be selfish to your country."

"You are very kind, sir," I replied.

"Not at all. Men who meet, as I do, thousands of youth from all parts of this great country learn to estimate people pretty quickly."

With this the great man, compressing his lips, gazed

at me with infinite penetration. Deeply flattered, I redoubled my attentions, which the Senator, for want of better, appeared to accept with a good grace.

"What I long to employ in public," I observed, "is my ability as a speaker."

"Which is precisely what to-day the nation most needs," responded he. "I don't pretend to oratory myself. I haven't time for it. My duties are to counsel and support the business interests of the country at the Capitol, seeing to it that the great aggregations of wealth, called corporations, are not oppressed by anarchistic legislation, on the one hand, and do not encroach beyond their legitimate sphere, on the other. I may add that really all that is necessary to capital is to let it alone, let it alone. But dangerous tendencies are being stirred among our people, Mr. Cameron. Capital will tolerate it only a certain time, and then we shall have a panic, the damnedest panic, if I may so express myself, ever seen on God's footstool."

"Then, like the Greeks," I exclaimed, "we need another Demosthenes."

"Undoubtedly," replied the Senator, adding: "I am glad, speaking of the Greeks, that you keep your eye on foreign affairs. I understand the person you mention is prominent among those people just now. Between ourselves, if the Greeks don't stop their eternal brawls with Turkey, Uncle Sam will have to say a word or two in the matter. We can't neglect our duty to civilisation with all that fleet of ours lying idle and burning coal in the Mediterranean."

From this kind of talk I got some notion of the statesman's learning and polish. By degrees, after several chats, he appeared to take an interest in me, and

he dropped the style of the politician for that of the hard-headed man of the world.

"Young man," he said, "you'll probably cut some figure in the world, for you have a good command of language. Don't let all this fashionable nonsense, this society, as they call it, get into your head. There's no damned sense in all this family talk we hear nowadays. Most of us never had any family. The rest of us are ashamed of whatever family we had. The whole country was founded by people as poor as poverty itself, working with their own hands, and glad to get ham and eggs three times a week. Now that we're rich, we're hunting genealogy. What do I care whether my ancestors' ancestors were in the smart set in the ark? Does it do me any good? Does it make me any better than the rest of the people? Pshaw! If a man has plenty of money, he's as good as any rotten young prince that ever looked about for an American soap-maker's daughter to support him."

Without flatly disagreeing with him, I suggested that, of course, he would concede some difference in blood.

"Mighty little," quoth the Senator. "The worst scoundrels I ever knew were of old family and the best fellows I ever did business with were as common as mud."

After a moment's silence he added: "My wife takes a great interest in these things. She gets me a new ancestry every year, and as I never know what it is, I'm never ashamed of it."

While he was making this remark there appeared in one of the walks young Catesby talking earnestly to Betty, upon which the Senator, turning to me, as if it

were unnecessary to use words, winked knowingly and grunted in a manner that indicated contempt beyond utterance.

I had not begun to think about a rival where I had so little aspiration. Meanwhile, to my surprise, one of the servants brought me information that the fair Mrs. Gordon, who had arrived a short time before, would like to see me at once. Uninvited by her hostess, she had come by right of connection, a visit I was none too pleased to hear of and which I felt was going to lead to unpleasant consequences.

CHAPTER XXV

AT THE COUNTRY HOUSE

ALL social contention among us is conducted by the women, among whom "society" is exactly what politics is among men. The same intrigues, the same vigilance against a rising rival, the same conciliation through fear, or oppression through power, the same necessity to be active in order not to be forgotten, the same emulation to be recognised by the leaders, and the same jealousies over the distribution of favours, all these things are repeated in the politics of the fair. They only receive favours who are in position to return them, and the favours they receive are commonly no greater than they can repay. A reception is a general convention, luncheon a council of the leaders. There is this striking thing in common between these two sorts of politics, that the title to leadership in both rests generally upon no better foundation than the fear of others to attack it.

What is known as society in the United States affords to the upstart unparalleled opportunity. Here there is no standard by which to measure the extent of impudence. When a new aspirant appears, if her origin be low, it is at first laughed at, but if her claims be obstinately persisted in and supported by wealth, curiosity is at length aroused. Who, it is inquired,

shall say that they are really her betters? Who, that would exclude her on the score of birth, can lay claim to more than one or two generations out of trade? Even among the latter, what indispensable stamp brands them with superiority? In Germany or in England the most splendid expenditures of the *parvenu* are beheld with equanimity by those whose genealogy is a part of the orders of the State and the very fabric of government. With the newly rich they need not vie whose family names are a part of the general history and preserved in household tradition. Now, in our own country, such as aspire to fashion must ever be on the alert to adopt its latest whims, the most trivial change of dress, of furniture, or of accent. These trifles, which an aristocracy of blood may disdain, are among us the only ordinary tests of elegance.

In the two days following her husband's "monkey funeral," as it was derisively called by the newspapers, Trixy, who cared not a particle about the shame of it, and indeed was glad to hear the town gadding about whatever bore her name, affected the air of one having a cross to bear. Such was the frivolity of her mind that she would have been pleased to bury a near relative as an excuse to wear frou-frou in black. Accordingly, she was now a very serious person during a day or two.

The ladies taking their tea at five o'clock, Trixy, during the talk, observed that there was a matter on which she desired their opinion. She would feel better if she had their advice. This meant that she had secretly resolved to do a certain thing, and merely wanted to have them approve in advance what they would otherwise condemn after it should happen.

"What I wish you to be frank about," said she, "is

this: Do you see anything wrong in my entertaining a young man in the afternoon when he drops in? Now be frank with me, perfectly frank."

"I don't know," responded the Senator's wife; "there's no harm in it, of course, except for what people may say."

"But they're always saying something horrid, anyway," said Trixy.

"To be sure," remarked another, "and the principal thing to consider is what your husband thinks about it."

"Oh, Dick entirely approves. In fact, he insists on it, you know."

"Our husbands are sometimes kind in their way of concealing what they really think," observed Mrs. Perkins.

"But Dick isn't that way at all," exclaimed Trixy; "he is wonderfully frank. For my part, I feel it my duty to let him know that I know that he trusts me implicitly."

"I am not sure," said the doctor's wife, with little tact, "that I should feel altogether pleased if the doctor should appear willing that I should have gentlemen visitors at a time when our most elegant women prefer not to receive them."

"Thank heavens!" replied Trixy, in her sweetest manner, "*my* husband has the most perfect confidence in *me*."

"That I can't say for mine," retorted the doctor's wife, in no good humour, "since I have never put his confidence to the test."

"One can readily understand," quoth Trixy, with a

happy laugh, "that some women are less tempted than others."

Both ladies having now drawn blood, the Senator's wife, deeming it time to interfere, remarked:

"These things are easily managed. You should do as my sister in the Navy does, and all the other ladies in the service. If you wish to have young men visitors, just invite a young lady as a guest for the season. Then, if any young gentleman calls to see you too often, it's the young lady he comes to see, so far as the world is concerned, and then there's nothing wrong in the thing."

This suggestion being regarded as very sagacious as well as moral, it was finally agreed that Trixy should do whatever her own judgment deemed best under the circumstances, that whatever she did would be quite right in any event, that nobody nowadays cared about these niceties, after all, and that it would really be better if there were less talk concerning women's actions in this terrible town. Then Betty added, with real innocence, that she thought married women less in danger than young girls when entertaining young men, since their thoughts were sure to be on their husbands all the while. At this observation the older dames, exchanging knowing looks, vowed nothing could be more true, and gave way by degrees to considerable mirth.

During the evening young Catesby, divining by Betty's glances where her thoughts lay, now assumed towards me a manner so supercilious that I began to hate him, the effect of which feeling was to make it a pleasure to me to divert her company, and as coquetry is natural to a maiden, however pure, the pretty and amiable girl made good use of the situation. Thus the

evening came to a close to her advantage, but before morning something was to make her visit a most unhappy one and leave her to wish she had never seen the dapple hills, the groves, and flowery lawns of Lenoxdale.

CHAPTER XXVI

ANOTHER NAUGHTY EVENING

SCARCELY had I gone to my bedroom that night when the butler appeared, though it was late, to have a word with me, which he said he had put off being so bold as to communicate until the arrival of a certain person had made it, if he might be permitted so to express himself, a duty "to all parties concerned," including myself, who, he was sure, would take no offence. After the circumlocution of a Chinese peace-talker, he made himself plain.

The morning after the monkey dinner he had been sent by Mrs. Oldworth to the Gordons' with a message, and, being as much admitted to that house as its own servants, he had gone directly to the breakfast-room to deliver it. There he had come upon a violent altercation between the Gordons, neither of whom saw him until it was too late. As a self-respecting serving-man he had remained in the hall, but, fearing some violence between the two, he had deemed it his duty to be within hearing of the secrets.

The truth of it all was that Trixy, like a clever strategist, had decided to be on the offensive, the best way to conceal her own movements being to keep her lord uneasy about the discovery of his. What he had seen between his wife and me the night before had

made some impression on him, she could perceive, so she poured a lively volley on him at breakfast about the affair of the yacht, then before them both in yellow pictures and glaring head-lines. But the husband, his head aching from debauch, was in an irritable mood. Without apology he flung back at her some of her own indiscretions that had caused small scandal, upbraided her with frivolity, blamed her for too much liquor, and ended with saying that no decent woman would be caught in such a situation as that in which he had found her with me at one o'clock that morning.

The lady, unaccustomed to such spirit in her husband, took an equally vituperative turn in order to subdue him, several of his daintiest affairs in the past being ripped open in no sweet or silvery tones. In short, it was what is called a cat-and-dog fight to the verge of scratches and blows.

"Then, sir, if you'll believe me," related the butler, "Mr. Gordon he says, 'If ever that Cameron' (calling you a very vile name, indeed) 'comes into this house again, I'll kill him,' and he says how he had been a-suspecting things for some time, and how a man of his honour and prominence could stand it no longer, and with that Mrs. Gordon she fairly screamed, she was in such a rage, and throws a cup, sir, a cup, I say, at her husband's head, which is very unusual in our best families, and I may say, sir, meaning no disrespect to a lady that you feel friendly towards, is not a fair thing to do as concerns the servants, they having a right to be exempted from such unpleasant occurrences and that a family shall be refined and peaceable, considering the meddlesome police nowadays. It was very exciting, sir, for she was a-grabbing other things

to fling at him. And I says to William, who also deemed it his duty to overhear what occurred, 'Oh! my God!' Then William says, 'What shall we do?' Then I says, 'Stay where we are.' Then he says, 'Let us rush in.' Then I says, 'Stay where you are.' Then he says, 'Let us make a noise.' Then I says, 'Stay where you are.' Then he says, 'She has seized a knife.' Then I says, 'You must not forget yourself,' and by that time she was in hysterics or the like, which made her harmless, so to speak, and justified our coming in as if nothing had happened."

The fellow then explained that he had hoped it would not be necessary to mention the matter to me, but that Mrs. Gordon's coming to Lenoxdale under the same roof with me made it humbly his duty to advise me of her husband's suspicions, not that such suspicions were justifiable, which, of course, they were not, but that I had been too good to him to be kept in ignorance of what had occurred. I sent him away with a piece of money, thanked him, begged him to be discreet, though I knew the story must already be in every kitchen in the city, and sat down to fume over so exasperating an incident. I saw my pleasant secretaryship in peril, together with the good name of the family that was befriending me.

There shone that night a radiant moon that filled with light the windows of my chamber and the veranda upon which they opened. Unable to sleep, I went out upon this porch. It extended around two sides of the body of the house upon the second story, so that some other bedrooms (though of this I did not think) opened upon it, one or two at a level with its floor, and others slightly above. Hardly had I paced twice the length

of this walk, everybody being apparently asleep, when I heard a noise at a window and saw the head of a woman peeping out. I would have fled if I could, for it was Trixy, who, instantly recognising me, called in a low voice that she would join me.

I was much perplexed. What else, however, could be done than to be polite? In a moment she came out sufficiently wrapped against the night air, but otherwise pretty loosely attired.

"You are avoiding me," she said at once. "You have scarcely said ten words to me to-day."

"I have not avoided you," I replied, "but it would be better for us both if I had."

"I thought you had more courage," she exclaimed, petulantly.

"Courage," I said, "has nothing to do with this case. It is a matter of prudence, and, I may say, decorum."

I didn't like to say *honour*, as that would have reflected upon her great purity, which was understood as a basis of all intercourse.

"There you go. A man's a man, always looking to his precious name. After forcing me to fall in love with you and humble myself, you are teaching me moral lessons because you're afraid people will talk."

"Now, my dear Trixy," I replied, "you must know me better already than——"

"I know," she cried passionately, "that I am in love with you—desperately, stupidly in love with you from the day I first saw you, and that I am going to have you to myself, all to myself. I have fooled with men, been reckless with men, but now I love one, and I want him. I am going to have love in my life, oppose it who will."

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"For Heaven's sake, stop, Mrs. Gordon!"

"Don't call me by that name, I tell you," she exclaimed. "Tell me that you love me, that you love me, do you hear?"

By this time she had her arms around my neck, self-willed and amorous. To no purpose I argued with her. She would have me avow my love, even though she saw she was compelling me to utter it. We were then standing beneath one of those smaller windows that opened above the porch. In a weak moment I exclaimed:

"Trixy, you know I love you. Are you not satisfied?" at the same time giving her a warm caress.

At that instant there was a sound at the window.

"Hush!" whispered Trixy.

"Some one?"

"Yes."

"Where?"

"Above—at the window."

The window had been softly closed, as if the person who did it desired not to be heard, or not to overhear us. We looked at each other in alarm. Then Trixy said:

"I know that room. Why is she not asleep long ago? You spoke too loud. Betty has that room."

We separated in alarm, I in disgust besides. In the morning I saw by her looks that it was Betty's room indeed, that she had overheard us, how much I knew not, and that she would not again be the same to me.

Determined to rid myself of the whole complicated situation, I got from Mrs. Oldworth an excuse to go to town, where I speedily hurried by the next train, for the first time feeling that it would be a sad business

to lose the affections of Betty. Her virtuous mind would be as much offended, I reflected, by my addresses to a woman already married, or by my disloyalty to a hostess in thus apparently meddling with her family dignity, as by any loss to herself in the discovery that my love was avowed to Mrs. Gordon.

These considerations, however, were for a time immediately removed from my mind by two or three new incidents by no means expected.

CHAPTER XXVII

AN ENTERPRISING REPORTER

ON my return to the city I found sufficient to employ me, besides which my curiosity concerning my uncle and Lillian made it impossible not to meditate such visits to the beauty as her convenience would afford.

The day following my return I was engaged in my little business as secretary, when there was handed to me the card of Mr. Jerry Waters, who desired to see me for a few minutes.

"Representing the *Daily Whirl*, Mr. Cameron," said he, upon his being admitted.

"I am glad to meet you, Mr. Waters," I replied.

"I trust Mr. Cameron doesn't object to giving the *Whirl* a few words on a subject of some interest."

"Not at all, Mr. Waters," said I. "In these days the press has always primary importance among business men, and scholars also."

That I looked forward with pleasure to my being quoted in an interview was now as plain as day to this young man, who had, all the while, eyed me very keenly.

"Why, of course, that's exactly the way our principal people look on the newspapers. You've hit it exactly, Mr. Cameron, hit it exactly."

With this, he noted in his memorandum my profound observation as if I had uttered something the town was not to lose, and the credit of disseminating which should belong only to the *Whirl*.

What I should have done was to ask the fellow his business at once. Instead of doing so, I leaned back with much self-content as a man bored indeed by this sort of thing, but quite indulgent, you know, quite indulgent. The reporter, for his part seeing he could probably extract what he desired without naming his object, then proceeded with great volubility.

"You've been private secretary and, I may say, a sort of private adviser to the Oldworth estate for some time, Mr. Cameron."

"Yes, for some months, though naturally I have not laid aside my literary studies which——"

"Yes, so I understand, a great reader," he exclaimed, leading my vanity on. "We newspaper men, you know, are well advised about all our prominent persons, and we hope you'll give something to the public of a permanent literary sort. In fact, that's what I came to see you upon to-day."

Here my proud fancy flattered itself that this lively lad had come to get my opinions on books and literature, and that, as private secretary in so prominent a family, I had become known about town already. I accordingly replied, with much affectation of self-depreciation:

"Oh, I don't estimate my little efforts very highly. I am reasonably modest, I hope. Still, it is a great satisfaction, Mr. Waters, to feel that one has in him something, you know, something——"

"Exactly. I understand, Mr. Cameron, understand

you exactly. If I had the time I'd make a specialty of literature myself. I suppose, by the way, you enjoyed the opera the other night."

"I love music, love Wagner," I responded.

"Naturally. Who wouldn't, Mr. Cameron, under such circumstances? In the Oldworth family box, I believe?"

"Yes, we were all there that night."

"Let me see—Mrs. Gordon also, I believe?" he inquired, innocently enough.

"Yes, and the Ransoms, friends of Mrs. Oldworth. You know the family name, I suppose."

"Yes, very well," he answered, and then beguiled me with rhapsodies on the opera, always setting down in his notes any comments of mine on the opera, while not taking the trouble to make a note of other things which he really wanted.

"This habit of eating after the opera," he remarked, "is the fashionable thing nowadays."

"Yes," I replied as one blasé, "we went to Sherry's the other night; though, really, eating bores me at that hour."

"Besides, it generally includes wine," he went on, "and that means indigestion the next day."

"Why, yes. For instance, we had some the other evening; for, as Horace says: '*Siccis omnia nam dura.*'"

"Very good! An apt quotation!" he exclaimed, noting it down.

The fellow, knowing his business and having both youth and vanity to deal with, soon had from me all he wanted, left me the best pleased victim he had ever ruined, swore I had done him the favour of his life,

and so lulled me as to his real designs that I could hardly sleep with impatience to see my name in the head-lines the next morning. Morning came, and this is what I saw :

"TELLS THE WHOLE STORY.
ROW BETWEEN THE TRIXY
GORDONS FULLY CONFIRMED.
YOUNG CAMERON TALKS PLAINLY TO
THE *WHIRL*.

"Ever since the *Whirl's* exclusive revelation of the scandalous, "profligate, and, to say the least, eccentric yachting party by the "well-known clubman, Richard Gordon, and his celebrated mon-"key voyage, society has been on the alert for further develop-"ments. Curiosity has been further excited by persistent rumours "of something unpleasantly domestic. These rumours have re-"fused to down. The public becoming fully convinced that every-"thing was not harmonious in the big house by the park, on ac-"count of the incessant excitement among the servants and the "sudden scattering of its inmates to their clubs and country "houses, the *Whirl* determined to have the whole affair impar-"tially investigated."

It then proceeded to give an account of the quarrel between the Gordons at the breakfast table, an account in which a hundred details were imagined, and every bad feature immensely exaggerated. The only circumstances on which the veracious journal was doubtful were whether it was a fork or a knife that Trixy had seized in her rage, or whether the plate she threw at her husband was Delft or Wedgwood, upon which points, being careful to be exact, the *Whirl* would not at present absolutely inform its readers.

All this was bad, but the accursed print then turned to me.

"Mr. Charles Cameron is an æsthetic young man, with little to "do except to keep his nails in order; and just why he is on the "Oldworth salary list has never been clear, or satisfactorily ex-"plained to a good many people in the inner circles of exclusive "life, as all the usual functions of their private secretary are taken

"care of by several other more experienced men. Suspicion has, therefore, pointed for some time to the unusual interest taken in this faultless youth by the lovely Trixy Gordon, who is generally credited with having got him the place in her relative's house, for reasons of her own."

I was then accused of having passed the winter in Florida with the Trixy Gordons, and of having played the part of the husband's friend in order to be near the wife. Then it went on:

"'All that occurred the night of the opera,' said Mr. Cameron, 'was that I accompanied Mrs. Oldworth's party to Sherry's, where we had a bottle of wine. I then accompanied Mrs. Gordon to her home, as Mr. Gordon was not with us.'"

"Questioned as to the hour, and some other embarrassing points, Mr. Cameron became evasive, finally availing himself of the privilege usually accorded gentlemen under certain circumstances."

I was then reported as having been at Lenoxdale with the fair Trixy, and was described as hopelessly infatuated with her. There was a false photograph of me, in which I was made to resemble a gambler.

I sat in helpless bewilderment. I turned the villainous print over two or three times in a faint hope that it was all a mistake. Then, with the loss of my place before me, as well as the deep injury to Mrs. Oldworth, I tore the sheets in pieces, and, swearing I would have immediate revenge, set out to curse, flog, kick and strangle the infernal Jerry Waters.

CHAPTER XXVIII

CONSEQUENCES OF VANITY

THE rage I was in, it is curious to reflect, was not because newspapers have no right to concern themselves with the domestic affairs of citizens not in public life, or because purely private scandals ought, in a proper condition of journalism, to be considered impossible subjects of interview. Such is the effect of custom, even when wrong, that upon this score I felt no grievance. What roused me was that I had been mendaciously misquoted. But, more deeply still, was I stung by the fact that the fellow, having made game of me, must be laughing in his sleeve.

It was not until I had made three calls at the office of the *Whirl* that I was able to find Mr. Waters, who, when I came upon him, was smoking a cigarette and chatting with two or three friends. The playful mood they were in added to my rage.

"Mr. Waters," I cried, "a word or two with you, please."

"Oh, Mr. Cameron! Just the man I was looking for—have telephoned your house three times since morning."

"Just step aside here, if you please," I replied. "I want to talk to you privately."

"Glad to talk with you just where we are, Mr. Cam-

eron," responded the shrewd fellow, who, with his companions, discerned there was mischief in me. "Now, as I was saying," he continued glibly, "the city editor has played you and me the damndest trick! Wouldn't you like to step upstairs? The fellow owes us both an explanation."

The situations are few from which impudence cannot extricate a ready liar. I was actually becoming willing to listen to him, when, perceiving what I deemed a knowing wink at his friends, I was suddenly brought back to such an uncontrollable resentment as to deliver him two blows upon the head with a force that sent him to the tiles on the floor. These strokes I would have followed with a more thorough drubbing had I not immediately received from one of his companions a hearty salutation on the cheek, and from another a still more painful one in the eye, whereupon the engagement, as military critics would say, becoming general, the office resounded with scuffling and blows. Under the circumstances, though, I was content to retire before superior forces, all being lost save honour, as I had three good pairs of fists to afford my face a thorough massage. Indeed, it would have gone exceedingly hard with me if some persons in authority had not put an end to the affray with all those hearty oaths in which our countrymen usually restore the public peace.

Not dissatisfied about my prowess, but with a sore head, I returned home as quickly as possible and dispatched at once this note to Mrs. Oldworth:

MY DEAR MRS. OLDWORTH: You will be pleased to know that I have to-day given a good beating to the scurrilous reporter whose article in the *Whirl* has so villainously libelled your family,

and misrepresented as well as misquoted me. My hands are too sore from the good use I have made of them to write further.

With your permission, I shall remain here a day or two, as I am trying to avoid arrest by the miserable poltroon who was saved by his friends from a severer castigation.

The next morning a servant had the kindness, under the pretence of keeping me advised, to bring me a copy of the *Whirl*, in which, to my torment, I read as follows, beneath a large picture portraying a scuffle like a bar-room brawl:

"GETS THRASHED BESIDES.

THE TRIXY GORDON-OLDWORTH'S CAMERON ASSAULTS A *WHIRL* REPORTER AND RECEIVES A COMPLETE DRUBBING."

Such were the headlines. The account began as follows:

"Maddened by the *Whirl's* exposé of his pretty connection with "the family in Millionaires' Row, Mr. Charles Cameron yesterday "afternoon conceived the idea of recommending himself to his "employers by ambushing Mr. Jerry Waters, whose brilliant work "in these columns has recently been the talk of clubdom. By a "cowardly assault when Mr. Waters' back was turned, the æsthetic parasite gained a momentary advantage over the former, "who, however, recovered himself so quickly that, had it not been "for the interference of his friends, he would have made it impossible for his assailant to earn his wages for a month. As it "was, young Cameron received a thorough mauling," etc., etc.

In misery over this, I received that night a note from Mrs. Oldworth, to whom some kind friend had doubtless hurried to show these publications.

MY DEAR MR. CAMERON: Thank you very much for your personally resenting such outrageous treatment. I cannot, however, refrain from feeling that you were a little indiscreet. Be this as it may, it is quite plain that your very pleasant services must end. Do not misunderstand me, Mr. Cameron. You are not wholly to blame. That I know very well. Still, I can do no less.

I beg you will accept this check for \$100. I hope I shall always be counted among your friends.

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To quit the Oldworths, to find lodgings, and to cast about for some new employment was my first business, but one thing, above all, was necessary to my peace of mind—to see Betty.

Should I telephone or send a note? Neither, I was sure. I must see her, talk with her, nothing less, immediately, too. I had the courage to go at once to her home, where I chanced to meet her between the house and the carriage, alone.

"Miss Betty," I cried, "just——"

"Mr. Cameron," she replied, trying to look me boldly in the face and very poorly succeeding, "please don't. You know what my parents think of all this. I—I am afraid—I must be plain. I am not to see you any more."

At this moment, her mother appearing, the interview was at an end.

CHAPTER XXIX

I QUIT NEW YORK

SUCH was my humiliation that I resolved to quit the town at once, and, longing for a chance, I found, as luck would have it, that there had arrived the other man to whom my uncle had given me a letter of introduction. This gentleman, though he had nothing for my services himself, referred me to a friend of his named Bunt, whose home was on the Pacific Coast. The latter, though he had a very quiet manner, was, in truth, thoroughly possessed of those arts by which an impression is made above one's real account, and people made use of in spite of themselves. Always affecting reticence, nor ever saying outright that he had a dollar, he would still contrive to leave you certain he had millions.

Of some fortune he surely was possessed at that time, so he did not then lack funds to exploit mankind. Contrary to the custom of Western men, he brought along a valet and a physician, his wife a maid, and his child a governess. His tips were so notorious that his entrance into a hotel or the mere shifting of his body was enough to set in motion every flunky within sight. The press he manipulated skilfully, being always able to be interviewed while affecting to dodge so much annoyance.

Upon his receiving me, he advised me that I must expect little from so modest a fortune as his, which, though enough to satisfy a contented investor like himself, was probably over-reckoned by a number of millionaire friends. Knowing I was apt to repeat whatever he let fall, he hinted at mines, street railways, a newspaper, and the Lord knows what else, while severally smiling them down to nothing. In short, I was quite confident we had here the true sort of riches, so I was deeply pleased when, upon my saying that I longed to try my fortune in the West, he drew out his cheque-book and, scribbling two hundred dollars in my favour, declared I should proceed to the Pacific Coast at once.

"You will find a telegram there, instructing my secretary to put you to some pleasant business immediately. Letters I don't write, my boy. My correspondence is wholly by wire."

Thanking him profusely and losing not an hour in preparation, I was on the train within two days, and within five more at my destination, an ambitious seaboard city which at that juncture was, though I could not see it, about to decline into one of those stages of depression which frequently recur in new communities. There I was put to some trifling work until the return of Bunt, who soon afterwards had two or three pleasant talks with me, and finally, having intimated what I could do, assigned to me the preparation of articles to be published under the name of "Visitor" communications, reflecting the sanguine opinions of Bunt on that glorious region. These letters were naturally not cooled by my style or sobered by my experience.

"Young man," said Bunt one day, "you have talent, and I find I made no mistake in binding you to me by

trusting you implicitly. Trust a young fellow deeply, and you either lose him quickly or get him forever. Now I'm going to advance you a notch. I'm going to give you business a trifle more delicate, a sort of diplomatic function."

At this I listened quite breathlessly, while he compressed his lips and looked thoughtful.

"A man in my position, supposing that to amount to something, must, Cameron, do everything in his power to advance the community in which he has accumulated—well, no matter what sum. He owes it to them not to leave them with his winnings because he has enough, but to help them even after he longs to retreat."

"Indeed he does, Mr. Bunt," I replied. "This city would be depressed, to say the least, if you should even mention retirement or travel."

"Yes, I fear so," he said, as if weary of millions, when, in point of fact, he was approaching insolvency. "Yes, I must remain in harness, like an old horse, for their sake. No matter, no matter. Now, one of the ways in which I can be useful is the inducing of wealthy Eastern men to invest their money here. Personally, I will not—no, I will not—talk to our moneyed visitors to that purpose. If they choose to approach me for advice, I feel it a friendly duty to give that advice. That is a different thing. Now, I will tell you of one or two little enterprises here, which you can mention to advantage to some Eastern gentlemen at present in the city, among them old Judge Cute, by remarking, we will say, how much people here are desirous of getting that stock. If he talks, you may express surprise that Mr. Bunt has not mentioned so fine

a property to him. That may interest him. Of course, I would not part with a dollar of my stock in these companies—heavens! no—but between you and me I am going to force one or two of my associates to sell some of theirs to these Eastern gentlemen. This in strict and particular confidence.”

Feeling much flattered to receive a commission in which, without my knowledge, he was employing several others more capable than myself, I listened eagerly to his description of these enterprises, together with the business arrangements in favour of them, and with little loss of time I contrived to add my mite to what may be called the atmosphere surrounding Judge Cute. This agreeable old gentleman nodded so pleasantly to my intimations that I was able to assure Bunt that the old capitalist surely adored this sort of investment.

“I think so, Cameron,” he replied, “and when the plant is in operation, remember, there is something better for you in store.”

It was only a few evenings after this that Bunt, conceiving from his various cooks that the bird was ready to serve, entertained Cute at his summer home, a beautifully situated cottage from which could be seen the rising walls of the new enterprise. Wine and cigars were passed to the guest, who casually remarked the progress of the plant. This, it was clear, was the right moment.

“Yes. By the way, Judge,” said Bunt, indifferently, “there is a great project.”

“So they tell me,” the Judge responded.

“Yes, a great project, in which I have a trifling interest myself.”

"So I was glad to hear," answered the Judge, "and I confess I have been looking into it a bit."

"Indeed!" Bunt exclaimed. "I think so much of the thing I wouldn't part with a dollar's worth of it on any account."

"Perhaps I could induce you to think twice about that, Mr. Bunt," said the Judge, "for, you know, I've had experience in plants of this kind."

"No, you could not get a dollar's worth of my holding, my dear fellow," replied Bunt, pleased with this favourable symptom, "but let me be serious, Judge. Men like you are a necessity here. We must have you. We can't develop without you. Some sacrifice must be made to secure you, and, having in mind a personal friend who holds fifty thousand dollars' worth, I am going to force him to let it go to you—going to force him, I say."

"My dear Mr. Bunt," replied the old Judge, "I am glad to hear you remark that your own interest in this undertaking is only trifling; for, having examined it carefully already, I can assure you in a confidential way that I wouldn't give you fifty cents for the whole thing."

This unexpected reply leaving a very bad taste in Bunt's mouth, he covered his confusion in the best way possible and dedicated himself, for he was very vindictive, to some revenge in business, being additionally stimulated to this by the fact that the old Judge had already, at his instance, been permitted to acquire, at a very low cost, a considerable interest in certain mines that had lately taken a most promising value from a chance, suddenly occurring, to sell them to a multi-millionaire in New York. Indeed, within a fortnight

this latter sale took a definite turn. The New Yorker was willing to buy a majority of the shares at a considerable price, and as this purchase would naturally make the rest more valuable, it was considered that whoever parted with his shares to the New Yorker would make a sacrifice. Under these circumstances Bunt took delight in inducing the Judge to dispose of the whole of his, even telling the latter outright in a meeting that this was, on his part, little less than an obligation, to all of which, much to everybody's surprise, the Judge assented. But the result of it all was very amusing; for by this sale the Judge made a profit of a large sum, while Bunt and the others, to their dismay, saw the market value of the shares, from some unexpected bad reports concerning the mines, almost immediately fall. In fact, things fell into so bad a way with my employer that within two weeks he was in such dire straits that I could see he would hardly weather the gale, and within a month later he quitted the place for China.

Before this occurred I had cast about somewhat for an anchorage, with the success of becoming secretary to one Ball Schurz, who was very high in the service of one of the railways. This interesting gentleman, though, I was not destined to experience long, for even had I had the patience to endure his ungovernable temper, I was destined to outlive him at too early a date. Having stolen from the company a staggering sum, which he had been squandering in various enterprises, in wasteful living, and upon an actress, the fellow surprised us all by blowing his brains out one charming morning, leaving us to find him in bed with a novel in one hand and the revolver in another, after an ex-

cellent dinner in those very apartments the night before with a company of friends not a whit more gay than himself. Nothing that I had seen in his life showed quite so much judgment as his death; though, as he was a man of artistic tastes, I wonder he did not get rid of himself without the shedding of his blood, which, in these occurrences, appears to me to be always unnecessary and untidy.

From this speedy succession of employers I began to learn the migratory nature of Western financiers, and, as one of them had gone to China and the other, as appears reasonable, to hell, I grew discouraged and of a sudden, with such means as I had, set out on a return to New York.

CHAPTER XXX

MY RETURN TO NEW YORK

BEFORE returning I remembered Senator Baxom's great cordiality, so I telegraphed him to answer whether he could get me some kind of a place at once, and you may imagine my delight when he replied that if I could come by the next train he could offer me something pretty good. As he took the trouble to add the utmost urgency to the message, I hurried as fast as I could, and at best it required four days to reach Toledo, Ohio.

I found him in a very ill humour, by reason of a disagreement between a carpenter and a plumber at work repairing his house. It appeared that the plumber, who had ripped up some of the floor to do his own job, had ventured, in re-laying it, to drive a nail or two, and this being noticed by the carpenter, the latter grew very warm. Let the plumber, he declared, drive another nail, it would be a non-union stroke, since the plumber, though a member of the plumbers' union, was neither carpenter himself nor member of the carpenters' union. To this the plumber replied that the carpenter was a tainted member of his union, because the very saw he had in his hand had come from a factory two thousand miles away, where they had three non-union men, whose presence polluted saws by the thousand. This

taunt exasperating the carpenter still more, he would argue the matter no longer, he declared, but, by leaving the house with his kit of tools, put a stop to every saw and hammer between the two oceans, or leave plumbers' babies to starve from New York to Seattle. Here the Senator came upon the pair and begged the plumber to desist, which he did by quitting the house altogether. Nor was the carpenter satisfied until the nails driven by the other were pulled out, vowing it was a question in his own mind whether he was doing his duty by his own union to remain even then, as the building was doubtfully cured of the recent contamination.

The Senator had scarcely overcome his rage when I addressed him, but he was nevertheless very kind, while he swore under his breath, like a good politician, at the unreasonableness of these people.

"You are too late, though, Cameron," said he. "Some friends of mine had a pretty little bit of work for you, but they would not wait a day longer. I'll find you something else. I'm glad, though, you're here. I heard something that will interest you. There turned up here the other day a man answering an advertisement of mine for a footman. Now, this fellow, when I asked him for references, mentioned old Cameron of Albany. He had left there after a row with the housekeeper, so he was anxious to talk and I gave him a chance."

"This is interesting, Senator," said I.

"Decidedly," continued the Senator. "Cameron, after making allowances for servants' lies, I think that uncle of yours is the worst old sinner with women on this continent—an affair with his housekeeper, crazy after manicure and ballet girls, and following Lillian Evanson in New York. Lively! But what I wish to

say is this: This flunky swears that several years ago the old fellow made a will with you in it as heir."

"What!" I cried. "Where is this man?"

"Hang it!" replied the Senator, "the scoundrel left me the second day—drunk, I suppose—all of a sudden, and nobody seems to know where he went."

"But his name, Senator?"

"Let me see—John Conners, yes, Conners. I'll have him traced a bit, Cameron. The fact is, I didn't pay much attention to his talk. Perhaps it ought to be followed up."

After some conference I decided to proceed to New York while awaiting what news he could send me, so by the next day I was again on Manhattan Island.

I had been away only four weeks, and I speedily resumed the two objects uppermost in my mind: my inheritance and Betty.

CHAPTER XXXI

TRIXY FINDS ME

THE Senator's story concerning the man Conners roused my interest greatly. I attached to it immense importance. Instead of reflecting on my uncle's present dislike, I began to rely upon his former indifference. Instead of remembering that a will is easily undone by the execution of a later, I preferred to think he might leave things as they were. Instead of thinking about his own vow, that he would leave me nothing, I kept returning to the remark of Maria Dole that I was his heir, though I knew well enough that the creature, at the time she said it, probably believed otherwise and was merely trying to make me serve her ends.

I resolved, though, to make a business of learning everything about these affairs. My first errand, after a desperate attempt to see Betty, would be an interview with Lillian.

To begin with, I returned to Mrs. Dobson's, where I was pleased to find a new boarder in Colby, the editor I had met at the play several months before. As this acquaintance was valuable to one needing employment, I resolved on making the most of it. He was a distinguished-looking man, notwithstanding a wen between his eyes made you think of St. Evremond. As he lived well without extravagance, our boarders were

sure he had laid by a good deal of money; as he had no wife nor ever was seen with women, they suspected him of concealing a mistress; as no one could find anything improper in his behaviour, they intimated there must be something wrong, or he would not be so careful.

The afternoon following my return I chanced, while passing a theatre, to see Betty entering with some other young woman. It was a rare piece of luck, should I be able to get a word with her, and knowing they might be for a moment separated while possibly leaving their cloaks in the coat-room, I followed them most eagerly. Good fortune attended me. The crowd becoming greater at the coat-room door, I was able to touch her arm while her companion was a few steps in advance.

"Miss Betty—a moment—please," I whispered.

She turned pale, then red, but stopped.

"There is something I must explain," I said.

"I have not asked you to explain anything, Mr. Cameron," she replied.

"I know it, I know it, but it wasn't true, what you overheard. I didn't mean what I told that woman."

"I never dreamed," replied the sweet girl, "that you would tell any woman what was untrue."

My face grew blood-red, and for an instant there was not a word on my lips.

"Let me move on, please," she continued. "I sail with mother and father to France day after to-morrow. Good-bye."

As her voice trembled, I could not abandon hope, and even held her arm.

"Miss Betty," I cried, "if you will give me one minute, just one minute to-morrow at the old place, you

know, in the park, I can make it all as plain as day. I can——”

She was yielding, it was clear, but as she half-raised her eyes, to make some sort of reply, we were interrupted by a voice behind us, the last voice on earth that ought to have been heard in such a precious crisis.

“Why, here you are, Mr. Cameron,” cried Trixy Gordon. “I was wondering whether you’d be here.” This, the creature, as if we had had an appointment.

Too surprised to speak immediately, I turned to get rid of her in some way or other, but it was a fatal interruption. Betty was gone.

Never was man more vexed.

“Mrs. Gordon,” I exclaimed, “I beg your pardon, but——”

“Now, don’t make a fuss,” she replied, peevishly, and, worse than peevishly, in a somewhat maudlin manner, such as let me see at once she had been drinking.

“Come, I’ve changed my mind,” she continued, while I was trying to get control of my temper. “These matinéés are stupid. I’m going back to my carriage. Come. We mustn’t be seen standing here.”

“No, nor be seen going to your carriage, either,” I replied.

However, she had no logic, the wilful, bad little creature, so it was common prudence to seat her in the vehicle, which was closed. Here the trouble was renewed with the half-tipsy beauty, for she insisted upon my getting in, too, or she would remain on the sidewalk with me.

Only a gentleman who has had upon his hands a reckless married woman in liquor can comprehend these situations, where your sole way to get out of a scrape

is to remain in it longer. I rode with her two hours, while she was getting over her excess.

"That little goose," she cried, referring to Betty, "is crazy for you. I've read her like a book. Thank the Lord! Lillian Evanson knew how to handle you. It would be better for us women if we had some of that stage training, and she is married in secret to your uncle! I suppose you know that."

"What!" exclaimed I. "Who told you such a thing?"

"Oh, now you listen to me, don't you? But what do you want with his money? You can have mine—and me." Saying this, she fell to embracing me.

To quarrel with her was useless. It was easier to comfort her, easier to swear I loved her—a mere fib, I trust the recording angel will regard it, perhaps even a milder perjury, a fibette, if I may coin the word. But, whatever it was, there was no avoiding it, which reminds me of the superior virtue of people reared in our religious faith; for, while the base Hindus and Japanese are given to lying in the most wasteful manner, we Christians rarely utter a lie except when it is necessary.

As for her story of the secret marriage, she was able to give me tolerable confirmation. And when I suggested against it the regard which Lillian was supposed to have for Alden, the pure-minded matron exclaimed:

"Good heavens! you don't suppose that's any obstacle, do you? She'll have Alden, too. What do women in her profession care for the marriage vows?"

On one point she afforded me a new idea, for when I remarked that I hardly thought Lillian would have conducted herself towards me with such cordiality under all the circumstances, Trixy broke out:

"The schemer keeps two strings to her bow. She's

after that fortune; so—mark my words—if that money slips by her to you when your uncle dies, she expects to marry you.”

It was near night when I set her down at her door, but she was sober enough then to excuse me without argument.

Glad to be alone, I could think of nothing except Betty, and this news about Lillian and my uncle, two topics which alternately raced through my mind. As to my uncle, it was clear his marrying would annihilate the reported will, either in law or from practical consequence. To see Lillian immediately and to get from her what clues I could was the first business in my mind.

CHAPTER XXXII

I BECOME A REPORTER

THE suspicious are not always bad, but the bad are always suspicious. The very next day I received a note from Trixy, in which, with infinite recklessness, she poured forth her love for me, only to conclude in reproaches concerning my supposed love for Lillian. I tore her note in pieces, and had hardly done so when Lillian, calling me by telephone, informed me that she would like to see me the next morning at eleven, an invitation so unusual as to cause me considerable speculation.

Promising to come, I resolved to make one last effort to see Betty, whose steamer would sail an hour hence. I would do all even a lover could—I would hurry to the dock, and if I could not have a word, I could at least offer her the argument of flowers.

To say the truth, my feelings towards this gentle little woman were now taking a turn more delicate than any I had yet experienced, and there was rising in my bosom the sincerest passion of my life. In her departure, if I had not already the pangs of a forsaken lover, I keenly felt at least a deeper disappointment than that of friend. Indeed, I must have been a very selfish fellow not to reflect that this was the best friend Providence had thus far sent me. Without a mo-

ment's delay I hurried to a florist, where I spent an extravagant sum upon flowers, and with these in great haste I made my way to the ship, none too soon, either, for the last warnings were given as I placed in her hands those perishable offerings that appeal more to the heart of woman, with their eloquent fragrance, than the splendour of precious stones. There was not time or opportunity for a word between us. I received only a look that made it clear she loved me, and I should have taken courage if I had not known how much a nature like hers would feel my conduct with Trixy.

Returning from the steamer I repaired to the office of Colby, and when I applied to him for some kind of a position, he talked to me in a very sensible way, saying I might begin at once as a reporter. Journalism, he added, was now the profession that had most influence on mankind. The day of clergy was largely gone since the middle ages, nor had the profession of law, which in the early part of the nineteenth century had seemed to have most influence in the world, remained of the same importance.

"The press," he concluded, "moves everybody. Everybody is afraid of it. What greater proof of influence is there than the dread of it? At this moment you, a penniless young fellow, would have difficulty in getting a moment's conversation with a strange business man in an ordinary commercial house. Take this pencil, though, scribble the name of this newspaper on your card, and the king of Wall Street will curse his clerks if they do not receive you with open arms. Why? Because you can ruin them. You can ruin them by a lie or by reckless misstatement, or even by hinting what

you dare not say, since their very efforts to set the world right about this matter only serve to spread the error. In short, representing this newspaper you are respectable, because you have power."

With such talk as this, which, adding to my feeling that the business was not without its literary side, put me in the proper frame of mind for a beginning, he gave me what he called an assignment. Then he introduced me to the city editors and to two or three reporters who happened at that hour to be at hand.

CHAPTER XXXIII

FRIENDSHIP WITH OLCOTT

WITH one of these reporters I sauntered to a neighbouring drinking-place, where we sat down at a table. Higgins, as he was named, proceeded to give me an account of the work in a general way, as well as much description of the other reporters and his superiors in the office.

"Our supposed brightest man," said he, "is Preston Olcott. Now, I like Olcott, but, in point of fact, his work at times is too coarse. You understand me—he overdoes the thing. His treatment of the Wilkison murder was too flamboyant, so much so that the other papers were able to laugh every other day. Of course, I'm a friend of Olcott's. I think a great deal of the boy, but one can't help noticing these things. For instance, his interview with Senator Platt the other day was, three-fourths of it, clearly a dream, and hell itself was to pay the next day. Of course, as I said, I'm a friend of Olcott's. I don't know why they continue to give him these choice bits of work. You understand, though, I like Olcott."

By this time I conceived a desire to see this Olcott, who, as the place we were in was a common resort of newspaper men, happened just then to come in, a handsome young fellow, little older than myself, and, one

could see at a glance, second to no mortal in impudence and enterprise. We immediately became friends.

"Fill these glasses again, hang it all!" exclaimed Olcott. "When I meet a good fellow, I like to celebrate the event."

Not suffering me to pay for anything, which he said would cast bad luck on my inauguration, he regaled me with liquor and good stories. He related how he had crouched behind an ash-barrel half a night to catch a fellow coming out of a house he had no business to be in, and how he had been invited to a small luncheon on Fifth Avenue by a young millionaire who wanted to conciliate him. There was scarce a spot in Christendom the fellow had not visited, in consequence of which he had three languages with glib error at his tongue's end.

That he was intensely ambitious was as plain as his capacity to get on in the world; so, when I made some remark about our employment, he exclaimed:

"Now, don't imagine, my young friend, that your humble servant is to remain a mere newspaper man all his life. No, sir! No, *sir*! This world is full of good things, and some of them are mine. I'll never be satisfied until I have a suite of offices with twenty rooms, and have seen my flunkies kick a millionaire out of every one of them."

Several drinks being taken during this talk, I began to feel enterprising myself, assuring my friends I should prove a veritable Aretino, the scourge of the modern kings of finance, beginning my career according to Swift's advice to a young poet, "by cutting and slashing and laying about me and banging mankind." This spirit, together with my quotations, produced a

good effect on both Higgins and Olcott, who thought still better of me when they learned that I had been private secretary in the great Oldworth family. This last caused them to recall the affair with Jerry Waters.

"You were the fellow, then, that whipped that cad! Good!" exclaimed Higgins.

"Oh, Jerry's not a bad fellow," remarked Olcott, "though, you understand, I'm glad you licked him. Nearly everybody needs a beating nowadays."

"Well, all there was of it," I said, carelessly, "was that I just walked up to him in the middle of his gang, took him by the collar, and gave him two or three good punches that laid him sprawling on the floor a while. Of course, the whelps that were with him pounced on me like a lot of cowardly curs, but I had no trouble keeping them all off. A scratch or two, you know, that was all."

"First-rate," said Olcott. "Of course, Jerry's paper gave the thing a good dress the next day at your expense, but we saw through that, and suspected he'd been thrashed. Let's move on."

Higgins leaving us, Olcott and I then started in the direction of the Bowery, it being my task to write some account of the humble theatres in that quarter; and Olcott vowing it was his duty to be with me in two or three at the outset. The first we entered was for vaudeville in continuous performance, but at that hour there was concluding a piece in two acts. From what we could guess as to the first part of this play, a Southern beauty, having long been troubled about some mystery in her dead mother's career, had conceived the terrible suspicion that the secret, into which none of her relatives would let her, involved a trace of negro blood.

Very soon after we entered, the climax was reached, and the heroine, informed that all that had been wrong in her mother was her having lived in adultery apart from her husband, fell to the floor in a swoon, exclaiming: "Thank God! Not tainted blood!"

At this pretty sentiment we could hardly forbear laughing outright, without noticing that two courtesans, who sat immediately in front of us, seemed to applaud it vigorously.

"I should think she would feel better!" exclaimed one of these nymphs.

"Think of having nigger blood in you!" said the other.

"Thank God! I come of ladies and gentlemen, and there never was nothing low in my family, like that," remarked the first.

"Nor in mine, neither," added her friend, "and, what's more, I can say I never soiled my hands with work in my life."

At this neither of us could longer restrain his mirth, which, attracting the notice of the women, immediately caused them to turn upon us in wrath.

"I'll have you understand, you dirty pups, that it's ladies you're making game of, and we'll have the perlice take you by the collars and throw you in the street."

This serving to increase our merriment, their rage became loud, whereupon some one in authority appeared in a moment.

"What's this noise about?" he inquired. "This house is run for ladies and gentlemen."

"It's that pair of low things interfering with us, that were meddling with nobody and gave our money to

this house for decent treatment, with their swearing and talking fit to make a lady sick to her stomach."

In the midst of these volleys, Olcott and myself endeavoured to make some explanation, which, however, was impossible between the temper of the ladies, then on their feet and surrounded by a crowd, and an evident dislike taken by this fellow to both of us. With little delay he seized Olcott by the body and began to push him to the door, when, with no further debate, I knocked him into the lap of one of the women, a fall which at once produced loud screams and general confusion. Others falling upon us with cries of "Kill them both!" a lively engagement followed. However, we were lucky enough to escape without a mauling, and, regaining the street through an alley, we congratulated each other in a succession of bumpers.

"Cameron," cried Olcott, "you are the man we've needed in New York. You're the man for me."

The fellow had really conceived a regard for me, and of this he at once gave me proof, for in a short time it was seen I had had too much liquor to prepare my article that night, and, to save me, he immediately pledged himself to write it himself. The next morning, when I awoke with an aching head, I saw in the paper an excellent account of "Our Bowery Playhouses—How the People Are Amused," nor could anything in that style have been better composed.

CHAPTER XXXIV

A SHORT INTERVIEW

THIS was the morning of my appointment with Lillian, nor did I lose a moment in my haste to keep it. I was full of curiosity, and, moreover, my growing aspiration to Betty whetted my interest in my uncle's fortune, which, if it should come to me early, might so much recommend me in the eyes of her parents.

"My dear Charles," began Lillian, after I was seated and we had exchanged the compliments of the morning, "you know your uncle is ill at Albany, I suppose."

I expressed surprise.

"I feared you might not be aware of it," she returned, "so I really thought it my duty to let you know."

"Thank you, Lillian," I replied, "but it seems to me if he be ill, it's high time his wife were there."

"His wife!" she exclaimed. "Ah—you mean me? Nonsense! I swear, Charles, if such a report has gotten out, there's not a word of truth in it—not a syllable. Now, Charles, let's be sensible. Please, you provoking fellow! What I wish to tell you is that I'm convinced old Maria Dole, in control of everything up there at Albany, is going to ruin you as heir, and you're a dear, good friend of mine, Charles. She'll destroy his will, now see if she doesn't."

"Well," answered I with a smile, "if there's no will, Lillian, everything goes to your humble servant."

"Ah! Oh, yes; of course," said Lillian, with a blush.

"Everybody else, including one ugly and one beautiful acquaintance of mine," I added, "may have more to lose by the destruction of a will than I have. Come now, Lillian, be honest, like a good fellow. It's yourself you're worrying about."

Lillian broke into a natural laugh.

"Yes, Charles," said she, "you're right. I was looking, just for a minute, to my own interests, but I'm not scheming to rob you; no, Charles, not that. Your uncle seems to abhor you, as you know, so you wouldn't be sorry if I got something where you can't. But, Lord bless you! dear Charles, what does it all matter? Let the Dole woman take it all if she can."

Dissenting from this last, I promised to do what I could to discover Maria's purpose. We talked longer, convinced, as I already was, that Lillian was party to no fraud, but as to what her actual relations with my uncle were I quitted her completely without hint.

CHAPTER XXXV

OLCOTT AND HIS SCHEMES

YOUTH is the only season of true friendship. The attachments of later years, enjoyed with little enthusiasm, are severed with little pain, nor is it too much to say that no great sacrifice was ever made for one who was not reckoned among our friends before we were five-and-twenty. Leaving Lillian's rooms, I went to the newspaper office, to thank Olcott, to whom I felt a warm desire to exchange further good offices, or even to be knocked on the head in the cause of so fine a fellow.

Nor could I get Betty out of my thoughts. This sudden going to Europe, what had caused it? As I have already said, I began to conceive towards this sweet young woman the regard to which she was entitled, both by merit and by affection, a sentiment that even the opposition of her parents to me had not been able to create, being now called into existence by a feeling that I had lost her. Whatever is fairly good becomes precious when it is taken away, notwithstanding we should not have thought it worth pursuing if it had never been our own. Betty, I felt, had been mine, and, though formerly not mad to possess her myself, I now could not bear the thought of her passing to another. Accordingly, I began, in seeking causes for her depar-

ture, to wonder whether young Catesby had anything to do with it, in which uneasiness I went immediately to the steamship office and found, with no small chagrin, that he had sailed on the same steamer. Inasmuch as, to Betty's parents, this fellow would seem a desirable husband for her, I saw her charms in a new light. What before was simple now appeared elegant, her modesty rare.

That afternoon I found Olcott in a bad humour, complaining that one of his best stories had been killed, as his phrase expressed it, by the advertising department of the newspaper, which had found it unprofitable to expose a most unlucky affair of the heart between a rich old merchant and the wife of the landlord of an uptown hotel. Better work, he swore, he never had done since he became a reporter. If this thing happened again, he would accept a dazzling offer from the *Whirl*. Besides, he had a mind to get into some other business.

He then recounted to me a new and whimsical scheme into which he had been invited by persons requiring the assistance of the press. There was an armless girl, who, having lost those portions of her body by a cruel accident, had achieved by infinite pains extraordinary skill with her feet. It was now proposed to incorporate, so to speak, this armless wonder as the Sally Sanders Company, sell shares as a special favour to a few persons, and, with the funds, exploit the charitable people of the country. For this purpose much ingenious but pathetic literature would be circulated, describing the girl's patient life, while asking such trifling coins as could be mailed back in a card devised to hold small pieces of silver or gold. There were, it was

reckoned, seventy million people in the country, of whom ten million negroes need not be counted, to begin with, as not knowing how to give anything if they had it, and five million whites too mean to give anything though they knew how. Of the remaining fifty-five millions there need be further deducted only children below the age of seven years, since in this enlightened country all above that age could not only read, but would have something to bestow. Nor was anything too small to be disdained in so worthy an undertaking, which was to allow Sally no less than ten per cent. of what was to be collected.

The young were to be caught with one sort of pamphlet, the old with another. Children were to be asked how they would like to go on with their long lives like Sally, while men and women would be made to feel how much harder it would have been to get the little they had if, during all their past years, their feet had had to do the work of their hands. Pictures of Sally in outlandish attitudes accomplishing, by efforts of an acrobat, what a child could do with its thumb and forefinger were already prepared. Her piety, her faith in our form of government, her services to her indigent parents with every toe she had to spare, were to be portrayed in print and illustration. It was clear that if only one person in ten gave anything, and such persons, on an average, only ten cents, there was a fortune in the incorporation of Sally Sanders.

"And, hang me!" exclaimed Olcott, "I'm going to have some of her. Do you want some?"

"What will a little cost?" I inquired.

"Oh, not much," he replied. "Don't let the money worry you. I'll lend it to you."

He then explained that it was going to cost him little, as the promoters relied on his pen in preparing the plaintive pamphlets for Sally to sign, as well as his influence among the newspapers, where he could get occasional good accounts of Sally, besides suffocating hostile inquiries. The purpose of the company was, of course, to be secret, incorporated as the Benevolent Company, or Home Charity Company. The capital would be small, a few thousand to begin the mailing of the cards and the hire of clerks, who should keep lists of persons and see that no giver was ever addressed a second time.

Finding that Olcott's share was not very large, I declined to accept a division on any terms, though grateful for the offer. He then mentioned an opportunity for a good bit of reporting that I might undertake that evening.

"Old Senator Baxom," said he, "has just come to town very quietly from Washington. With this Spanish war approaching, an interview with the old devil would be a good hit, for I know the *Whirl's* men have tried it already, and failed. I have in hand something else to-day. Why don't you try him?"

"Senator Baxom?" I cried. "I know him. I met him first at Mrs. Oldworth's."

"Then get the old fish in your basket. You understand, he and the President are very close now; he's in schemes with the President's brother. He's here in town about them, I'll bet."

Without further loss of time I hurried from hotel to hotel and from club to club, until I found the Senator. For my recent troubles he was very sorry, saying in a

confidential manner that some of the young matrons in town stood in need of a cold bath and bread and water.

"There's too much luxury here, my boy; a terrible fever to get money and to spend it," said the Senator, who was notorious for his rapid accumulations, "and where the devil it's going to end I don't see."

When I informed him of my now being a reporter, the statesman looked apprehensive, and when I requested something I could publish, he gave me no hope. But, as he was really kind-hearted, he listened to my plea that the thing would do me good service, and said:

"I've been scaring you newspaper men away like crows all day, Mr. Cameron, but, as I've taken a fancy to you, I'll do you a turn; but you understand that what I tell you, you are supposed to learn somewhere else."

He then gave me considerable gossip that was really new concerning affairs in Washington. In all these he himself was so cunningly connected that the public could not fail to conceive a greater opinion of his influence, while it would be impossible for any one to trace the subjects to him.

"Now," he said, in conclusion, "this will please that city editor of yours if he knows his business. At the same time you are to add substantially as follows: 'Senator Baxom being seen on this matter at the Fifth Avenue Hotel to-day was very indignant, refused to submit to an interview, and denied the rumours as utterly without foundation.' You understand, Cameron, that this little talk of ours is a mark of personal confidence in you. There's a way of doing these little things so that nobody is the worse for them. Let us see how well you'll do this. When you come to Washington, say, next fall, after a good summer's training here,

come and see me. I think I know where I can make you very useful. And, my boy, take an old fellow's advice, have all the fun you can with the women. You wouldn't be worth kicking out of the way if you didn't. But don't let anybody find it out. There's no money in that, no money in that. Attend to business, my boy, always. I've been thinking of you frequently down in Washington. Cameron, you're going to do well."

CHAPTER XXXVI

OLCOTT'S LOVE AFFAIR

MY report of the interview with Baxom did me much good, to which success I added several pieces of news in a very pleasant vein. That I had a knack of writing was very plain to myself, as well as others, so all that was necessary was that the city editor should educate me in divining what is really news; that is to say, what the public is interested to hear. The tribulations of the obscure are unimportant unless they are uncommonly queer; but the slightest incidents among people of consequence are eagerly read by everybody in town. I soon saw that whatever is reported concerning a man of doubtful prominence must be made acceptable to the crowd by his being raised a trifle in rank, so that, if he be only a modest doctor, he is described as one of the leading physicians of the city; or, if a common lawyer, a very prominent attorney. Discord between an ordinary couple of some means is, for this purpose, a scandal involving one of our most fashionable families. Riches are magnified and numbers multiplied, not because editors prefer exaggeration, but because the multitude demand it.

Perceiving in two or three weeks I had made a good impression, I would undoubtedly have reinforced my self-conceit had not Colby talked to me very wisely of the long experience required to make a perfect reporter.

"You are certain to commit some bad mistake," said he, "so be on your guard, for I can't be bound to say that even I could keep you in your place if others should ever insist upon dropping you."

This talk I repeated to Olcott, who, though he confirmed it, declared it mattered little when I was discharged, as some other newspaper would take me up; besides which, he reasoned, the occupation was too poor for any man of sense to make of it more than a passing use.

"You can get some useful acquaintances in it, and then get out of it after laying up a deal of information about everything and everybody in town. Newspaper men are poorly paid, even in the higher ranks. What editor is paid as highly as lawyers and physicians are?"

He now related to me that he had sold his shares in the Sally Sanders Company at a good profit, feeling sure that the fame of that lady's sorrows would become great enough to invite exposure, which would render them worthless.

"But now, Cameron," said he, "I have something to confide in you that I will want you to assist me in. I have a love affair on my hands. I'm going to marry a certain young woman, or know the reason why. There's a rich old fellow in Columbus, Ohio, named Jenkinson, and he has a daughter in school here, though he has just taken her home in a devil of a hurry, to avoid your humble servant."

"Is she pretty? What's her name?" I inquired.

"As pretty as a peach," he replied; "her name is Mary."

"How did you come to know her? Tell me," I asked.

"It's no long story," said he. "One day I went to this school, a private one on Fifth Avenue, to get an account of a scandal that had happened to one of the pupils, and Mrs. Gownly, the head of the place, to suppress the facts made herself specially agreeable to me by showing me the entire interior and equipment. While we were at this I happened to set eyes on Mary, and—well, you know, men in our business don't lack ability to make the most of an opportunity. I gave her several glances that it would be infernally hard to translate, but enough to show a sensible girl that she had made a palpable hit, and I can tell you, old man, I got several as good as I gave."

"What was Mrs. Gownly doing during this?"

"Oh, making herself agreeable, frightened to death, of course, for fear I should either discover the real facts or make up some story that would be worse. The old goose actually introduced me to Mary. That was my chance. In a minute I was an old resident of Columbus, Ohio, loved the State, used to play where Mary was born. Did Mary catch the point? In a second. Cameron, it was wonderful the way that girl helped me play my hand, answering to my lead as quickly as if we had arranged the cards beforehand. 'This is very charming, this incident,' says the old duenna, 'and I am confident will assure us some pleasant words from the press.' 'Correct, madam,' said I. 'Depend on me to protect this house from the reckless gang of young fellows our papers employ nowadays. I will throw all of them off the scent at once about this matter. Of course you understand, Mrs. Gownly, I'll have to exert all my influence to quiet our own office, which has direct information and expects facts.' 'Thank you very

much, Mr. Olcott,' says Mrs. Gownly, 'though, you understand, there is absolutely not a particle of foundation for this talk, as I made clear to you in the beginning.' 'Certainly, ma'am,' said I; 'you may depend on my taking care of your interests successfully'—this as if I were a power in journalism."

Apologising for his not having confided all this to me before, Olcott continued his story by adding that, on the pretended insistence of the city editor, he called a second time during a recess, in which he knew he should have a chance to see Mary again. As there is nothing women admire more in men than that boldness of which their own sex has so little, and as the fellow had a very pleasing manner, the attraction became mutual enough for him to risk passing her a note. From this followed a meeting during the next half-holiday, several other pretty incidents of the same sort, a clandestine correspondence, the exchange of vows, and all the pleasures of honourable, yet stolen, love.

However, it was not long before old Jenkinson and his wife got wind of the thing, whereupon the girl was recalled to her home without delay, a note being sent by the father to Olcott to the effect that, if he were caught sneaking about Mary again, his back would have to pay for it. The effect of this diplomatic communication upon both the lovers may be imagined. From that time either would have died at the stake rather than love any one else. The girl, for her part, regarding her rights as a Western young woman is apt to look on them, gave herself up to sullen defiance and a secret correspondence through one Laura Gay, a trustworthy friend, who got from the business the pleasure both of deceiving Mary's parents and of be-

traying to a few friends the secret of her own important services.

These transactions having continued several months, Olcott was now in great alarm through a letter from Mary, tearfully advising him that, unless he took immediately some steps to rescue her, she could find no excuse for refusing to accompany her parents to Japan, as they were about to close their house without leaving her any other dwelling.

"This lead calls for trumps," said Olcott, in conclusion, "and I propose to play them. I go to Columbus at once, you with me. I'm going to marry Mary Jenkinson."

As nothing could have been more ill advised, I applauded his resolution to the skies; for when does youth stop to reckon on poverty, short acquaintance, justice to parents, or disparity of fortunes?

"I knew you would look on it that way," he said, grasping my hand. "That girl has been suffering the tortures of the Inquisition for me. She's a remarkable girl, Cameron, remarkable."

He then explained to me that, knowing not a soul in Columbus, he was sure to have need of me in some degree or other, as there was no saying just what sort of difficulties he might encounter. He had saved, he said, about two thousand dollars, so he felt not unprepared for the enterprise, including the expense of taking me with him, a disbursement, however, which I swore I would not have him bear for anything in the world. As you may imagine, nothing could possibly have been more to the taste of two young men than this kind of an adventure. Indeed, neither of us could sleep much that night in our excitement. After arranging to

depart the next day, with the consent of the city editor, we busied ourselves in the purchase of many little articles of apparel, besides a diamond ring for Mary. We also discussed apartments for the happy pair; Olcott being at first inclined to select lodgings for her at once, furnish them extravagantly and delight his mate with a nest as good as the one she left behind, a folly that would have rendered him well nigh penniless, but one which he would undoubtedly have committed had we not concluded that the pleasure of spending money for such a purpose ought to be left to the bride. In his enthusiasm he declared the girl should have as fine a home as her father had afforded her.

"Confound a fellow," exclaimed he, "who will take a girl out of a fine house, to make a scullion of her!"

After such expressions we were sure to drink the health of so sublime a virgin in particular, and of American girls in general, a species which, we agreed, rendered the maidens of all other countries contemptible. Confiding in him my growing affection for Betty, I was reproached for having kept it from him so long; but, as I was able to retaliate about his silence in the present business, we both admitted that love affairs are delicate things to mention until one knows he is successful.

That we should succeed in our errand was not for a moment doubted. Olcott had, notwithstanding his youth, seen a great deal of the world as a newspaper correspondent, had made his way by his wits in Europe, Mexico and Japan, had gotten out of scrapes repeatedly by sheer impudence when he could only imperfectly speak the language of the country, and was accustomed to regard everything as attainable by him who had

made up his mind to have it. The plan was, in a general way, to meet Mary at the house of Laura Gay, but if this were prevented by the vigilance of the parents, or any other accident, we would resort to the next best scheme, and even carry her out of her home by night.

In this fine humour we were about to repair to the train when a telegram from Laura brought us the sorry news that old Jenkinson had discovered the correspondence, had denounced Mary's confidante, and had taken steps to keep the girl more cut off than before from any communication. This, it was plain, would make our enterprise less simple. After cursing the old man as a monster without parallel, and indeed unequalled in Thibet or Turkey, and after laying this new trouble to the probable gadding of the fair intermediary, none save men being able to keep a secret, we began our preparations in a frame of mind easily to be conceived by such as are not too old to recall the spirit of twenty-two.

It was decided that we should start on a late train that evening by way of Albany and Buffalo, which route making my purpose easy, I was permitted to go half a day in advance, so as to pass a few hours at the former place in quest of some information about my uncle's illness.

CHAPTER XXXVII

I MEET MAUD START

ARRIVING in Albany, I sauntered, as was natural, in the direction of my uncle's house, hoping for an opportunity to get a word from a tradesman, who, perhaps, might be going in or coming out of it, and to see what I could. This excursion I conducted with some caution, lest the vigilant Dole, or some of the servants, should get a glimpse of me, and, on my second turn around the premises, I observed a tall young woman leaving the house with a small satchel or case. Her figure being elegant, I sniffed another of my uncle's playful affairs, recalling, too, that Senator Baxom that day in Toledo had mentioned manicures as having come within the aged libertine's kindness.

I followed her at the interval of a few hundred feet until she entered a restaurant downtown. It being then time for dinner, I dropped into the place myself, for there is always a chance for young people to become acquainted. The plan was not a bad one, as I found the tables all filled, except the very one at which the girl had taken her seat, so this one having chairs for three persons vacant, I sat down in one opposite to her without appearing even to have noticed her; though, in fact, I had gotten a sufficient glimpse to see both beauty and vice in her features.

In a casual way I caught her eye two or three times while giving my order, until she began to fly signals which no gallant navigator could disregard without losing his self-respect. We exchanged unimportant remarks, then laughed a little, and finally pretended to be old friends, in order to deceive the proprietor, while we should enjoy a bottle of champagne.

My fairy, under the influence of the bottle, grew communicative. She was a manicure, she said, but people were so mean, the vocation was only fit to starve in, which statement might have led me to inquire how she came by her finery, since she was elegantly dressed, had I not remembered that my uncle in these little matters was probably very liberal.

"I suppose," said I, "you don't have many rich people here to get employment from?"

"Not so many as you'd think, but, then, it's always the rich that are meanest to us."

"I suppose old Cameron is the richest man in town, isn't he?" I asked, innocently.

"So they say," she replied, "but he's so sick I suppose he can't live long. You live in New York, I believe you said?"

This last she asked as if become cautious.

"Yes," I answered, "and, by the way, they say down there the old fellow's married in secret to Lillian Evanson, the great actress."

"No, he isn't, at all," responded the nymph, promptly; "though, of course, I don't know. I never met him in my life. You're a drummer, just passing through, probably?"

This I acknowledged. The lady had obviously become a trifle cautious again, so I led the talk to other

subjects with the intention of bringing it back later, all of which resulted in our discussing birth and blood. Her name, she said, was Maud Start, who, she begged leave to say, came of as good stock as anybody else, and was a perfect lady. About a hundred years ago her great-grandfather, a Virginian, had removed to Kentucky, where her grandfather had married the daughter of one of its most honoured and popular assassins. Her father also had been prominent in feuds, but, one year, during the usual May-day murders, he had had the ill luck to kill a friend instead of an inveterate foe. This mischance being considered against the law, the local prosecutor insisted upon preferring charges against her father, with such success that, notwithstanding her father frankly explained the affair along with an apology, he was subjected to the unusual humiliation of a sentence to jail for six months. This penalty, in accordance with local custom, he was permitted to discharge without confinement by his appearing before the sheriff each morning, to afford a constructive detention. However, the thing so grieved him that, after wounding the prosecutor, he quitted the State and married in the North.

Wondering how to draw her mind back to my uncle, I was about to hazard something in that direction, when, to my astonishment, a woman spoke to her behind my back, in the voice of Maria Dole.

"I have been looking for you," she said, "looking everywhere. I want to see you."

By this time I had turned my head, so that she saw my face, and, I assure you, the countenance was a study, with more lines in it than Ostade himself could have drawn in a hag. The scene became all the more

interesting because the fair Maud, perceiving that an acquaintance, and a disagreeable one, existed between Maria and me, began to look queer herself, in which perplexity, being muddled with wine, she mentioned my being a cousin of hers who sold goods for John Wanamaker.

"Oh, never mind that kind of talk," sneered Maria. "This young man is Mr. Cameron's nephew. I suppose he told you already," she added, with a smile.

Now, the manner in which the girl received this news was enough to convince me forever that some mischievous relation existed between the two, and, feeling that I had gotten all the information I could, I left them with a pleasant bow and a jolly air.

I then repaired to the station, to take the train on which Olcott should be coming from New York, and on this I joined him.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

ADVENTURE AT COLUMBUS

FROM the moment of the train's leaving the station Olcott settled into a serious humour, beginning to feel at last that it is no child's play to marry, especially when you have to steal the bride, a mood he continued in until we sat down to a meal in the dining-car. Here an idea suddenly occurred to him.

"Watch," said he, "those two fellows across the aisle. They are Englishmen, as you can see by the way they handle their knives. If they talk at all, notice their accent closely, for I've a little plan I'll tell you about after a bit."

Doing as he suggested, I was soon rewarded by hearing some conversation between the two strangers, both Britons, as their voices and accents placed beyond doubt. Of course we appeared to take no notice of them and they, according to the custom of their race, were upon honour not to have become aware of our existence. Among the whimsies of vanity nothing is more unaccountable than the desire of most travellers to make themselves look important in the eyes of strangers, who cannot possibly know anything about them, whom they do not meet or expect to meet, and whom they know they will lose sight of in an hour or two forever.

No sooner had we returned to our car than Olcott remarked:

"Cameron, when we arrive at Columbus we will make a few efforts to talk to Mary by telephone, and if we fail, old man, then, having registered under assumed names to begin with, we will operate under them. You are to be Edward Jones-Boggs. That infernal telegram this morning upset my plans, and it's as plain as day that I can't play the simple hand of having Laura Gay bring Mary to her house to meet me. No, sir. That old man knows his business. Neither Laura nor any other schoolmate is trusted. He'll watch her like a hawk until he takes her out of town. We have to act pretty rapidly, and I'll tell you what I'm going to do."

He then proposed to me the following course of immeasurable impudence: We were both to register our names at the best hotel as Englishmen, I under the name he had just given me, and he as Stanhope Sinclair, a lord travelling incognito, but subsequently to be betrayed by me in a slip or two of the tongue. We were representing English capital, desperately anxious, however, to conceal our business as well as distinguished social position. Immediately upon arriving I should seek an interview with the most prominent real estate man in town, respecting a site for a steel-pipe mill, the business of old Jenkinson, and, swearing the fellow to the most profound secrecy, lead him into suggesting that the old man wait at least a day or two instead of whisking himself and his family out of town at once, while Olcott should busy himself in devising some way of meeting Mary. If the scheme worked at all, it was almost certain we should be invited to her

very home, people west of the Alleghanies being pretty hospitable, to begin with, and uncommonly liable to be duped by anything from abroad.

"You couldn't play this game in New York twenty minutes," said he, "but out here they know little or nothing about the English. All you have to do is to look stupid and give an English accent to about half a dozen words that I'll teach you."

To this escapade I beginning at once to offer objections, he had a ready answer to them all, saying that he had to give an assumed name to the hotel clerk in any event, lest his presence in Columbus be discovered, so it mattered little whether he gave himself noble blood or not. What he principally argued was that, in some way or other, he must, either through himself or me, have an arrangement with Mary, with whom his only link had been broken in the discovery of Laura, nor would it be safe to go to that young lady, or even to let her know of his arrival, since there was no telling either how faithful she had remained or how discreet she could be under circumstances so exciting. To go to anybody else would not do, because, being an utter stranger, he would not know whom to trust. He carefully and earnestly anticipated every objection until he convinced me.

"You see," he concluded, "I must do something desperate to hold the old man in town. For all I know, he may be leaving there to-morrow, and I can't say but Mary, disgusted and tired out, and not knowing whether I can get her out of the scrape, may give up the fight and go, too, especially as she can get no word from me, for how can I telegraph to any one that I am actually on the way? A rich old devil like Jenkinson

must have influence enough in his own town to have me interfered with by the police or private detectives on some pretext or other, if he should happen to get wind of my coming."

While he thus discussed the business, he took from his pocket two thousand dollars in currency, of which he handed me five hundred as a fund to be spent liberally in any emergency, should we have to act separately. This sum, the greatest I had ever had in my pocket, raised my spirits to the height of the adventure.

"We shall look a trifle young," said he, "to be the representatives of big capital very long, but we can be advance agents or scouts, so to speak, without overdoing the parts, particularly as we both look a few years older than we are. The fact is we don't have to talk much. The talking is certain to be done by the broker or the fellow who wants to sell. Let a buyer only hint what he wants, and these promoters will imagine immense things behind him."

The cleverness of the fellow was wonderful, as, hour after hour, he imagined the possible situations we might be in, and prepared explanations or escape.

"If we can keep Jenkinson in town three days," he cried, "I'll make Mary Mrs. Olcott."

Fortunately, his appearance was utterly unknown to any one in the Jenkinson family, except Mary, who had no photograph of him that could, by any chance, be in their hands.

With no small excitement we finally went to bed, and the next morning were in Columbus, where we strode through the station to a cab. In an excellent imitation of the English manner Olcott passed his bag to the cabman, who placed it on the seat in front, the

labels pasted on it by the Bonifaces of London and Shanghai appearing to do us very good service in that conspicuous place.

Being soon at the hotel, we alighted, went to the clerk's desk, and in some self-possession registered our fictitious names from London. When the clerk asked us with unusual politeness the sort of rooms we desired, I merely said "Oh" in an intonation taught me by Olcott, who himself answered that he would be satisfied with "a bit of a suite with a bath, please," giving to the word *bath* a broad sound that suffocated its vowel, besides adding a rising inflection to the word *please*. This, with some languor of manner, distinguished his voice at once among the nasal tones around us, to such a degree, in truth, that I went up to our rooms in much confidence about our deception, began to look by people instead of seeing them, and could not have felt more lofty if I had actually possessed the blood of all the Howards.

In order that everything might be ready, I called the hotel valet to set in order the suits of clothes which Olcott and I had with us—Olcott's in particular, since he hoped to have need of his finery. No sooner did this flunky show his face than I felt I had seen him before, in consequence of which I at length asked him his name.

"Conners, sir," he replied.

"John Conners?" I asked in excitement.

"I hope, sir, it's a matter of no importance," replied the fellow, resuming his task.

I saw that I had found my man, for I could recall his face as one I had seen during my short stay at my uncle's, but, one thing was quite certain, the creature,

though he recognised me, had his reasons for not making himself known, while I, for my part, as Jones-Boggs of London and Olcott's *fidus Achates* in so momentous an enterprise, must not dare to open my mouth to him.

The man having closed the door behind him, I stepped into Olcott's room to tell him the important bit of news that Conners had drifted from Toledo to Columbus and had our clothes in his care at this minute.

"Good Lord!" cried he; "our *incogs* are done for—the scoundrel will give the house your real name. We have evidently less time than ever to lose."

CHAPTER XXXIX

FURTHER OF THE AFFAIR

OLCOTT now hurried to the telephone directory. In a moment, with keen anxiety, he called for the Jenkinsons' number, and this being given him, he was informed that Miss Mary was indisposed that day, as well as too busy to answer.

"Tell her," cried Olcott, "that her cousin is here from Cincinnati and wishes to speak with her," adding aside to me that, as she had a cousin in either Cincinnati or Chicago, he forgot which, he would take a chance. However, this had a bad effect, for, to his alarm, he was next answered by Mrs. Jenkinson, who, announcing herself to be such, inquired who it was that called, since her daughter had no cousin in Cincinnati. This little slip did not confuse Olcott, for he quickly replied that he had meant to say from Chicago. But the lady, not recognising his voice and probably wondering why he did not give her some words of salutation, appeared not to understand and again asked who he was, so that, his position becoming a trifle warm, he was obliged to get out of the conversation with a pleasant sort of laugh, explaining that he was merely a friend trying to tease Miss Mary, and, to avoid further inquiry, pretended that the telephone was

working so badly he could not make out another word she said.

"This," said he, as he sat down, "is a bad start, but we had to make an attempt, as we might have had better luck."

With this he got from the directory the telephone number of Jenkinson's office and inquired whether that gentleman was in town. Here he had more success, for the person replying informed him that he was. However, he added that if any one desired to see Mr. Jenkinson on a matter of importance, he had better do so immediately, because he was going out of the city that night upon a long absence. This being information to our purpose, it was forthwith decided that Olcott should take a turn or two around the residence of the Jenkinsons', while I should endeavour to open some negotiations that might delay the old millionaire at least twenty-four hours.

No occupation so speedily educates effrontery as the occupation of a reporter. The experiences I had been through in New York, followed by several weeks as a gatherer of news and an interviewer, now served me so well that I had no great trepidation in undertaking my part, the more so as I knew it had to be played only a day or two at most, and, as it involved no swindling, could not be attended by annoyance from those unreasonable persons, sheriffs, magistrates and policemen.

Having selected what I conceived to be the most prominent real estate office in town, I asked one of the clerks whether Mr. Barberry would give a few moments to Mr. Jones-Boggs of London. This favour

was promptly granted to me. I found Barberry to be one of those brisk, sanguine, and by no means practical-minded persons whom we commonly see in this sort of business, a business requiring enthusiasm and imagination in a greater degree than it does severity of judgment or executive ability. Having exchanged the pleasant remarks that usually precede negotiations between those who intend to take as much advantage of each other as possible, we waded into deeper water.

"Hunting investment for English capital, eh?" said the plump little man. "Well, you've come to the proper town. Columbus is one of the finest towns in this glorious country of ours, but very conservative, Mr. Boggs, very conservative. Now, just what line of investment do you fancy, Mr. Boggs, what special sort, so to speak?"

"In great confidence, Mr. Barberry, my instructions were to get all the data necessary for an extensive pipe plant."

"Exactly," he replied. "Yes, I see. Our firm has given special attention to just that class of investment. You certainly knew whom to go to. And, I see, you are connected with that English syndicate that has been making similar inquiries in the neighbourhood of Pittsburg lately? Pardon my asking, you know."

Not knowing just where this would lead me, I hesitated, but this, far from doing any harm, led on the imaginative little man.

"Exactly, Mr. Boggs. You needn't answer. I appreciate your position. I understand. There must be caution, of course."

"Thanks, Mr. Barberry, especially as you understand

that I am simply the confidential advance agent of the syndicate."

"Precisely, Mr. Boggs. I understand your situation. Now, you probably are aware of the large plant of the Jenkinsons' here. Heard about it, perhaps?"

Being on this also a trifle slow, I was again relieved by my brisk little friend.

"I see, of course. Naturally, you've not come here blind. I understand your situation exactly. But, you know, Mr. Jenkinson has repeatedly declined offers for his property, so it's no use to approach him, I imagine, unless he sees heavy competition in a new concern."

"Money, Mr. Barberry, will do anything," I replied, with much gravity.

"Precisely the way I like to hear a man talk," exclaimed Barberry. "What's the use of power nowadays unless you use it? And, the Lord knows, you English are lousy with money, so to speak, though Uncle Sam is accumulating a bit himself lately. I've always been a warm admirer of the English. What's your next idea, Mr. Boggs?"

"In a general way I would suggest that you sound Jenkinson's people on this subject. It doesn't matter much to us, but perhaps you had better act quickly, because our secret advices are that he is going away."

"I see you've kept yourself advised," replied Barberry, as if he knew of Jenkinson's intentions. "Yes, there's some truth in the report, but, of course, a business man is never in a hurry to leave town when there's money in sight."

We then agreed that he should forthwith have a word with Jenkinson, while I should return to the

hotel, where, as I informed him, I had an associate. In speaking of Olcott I called him, as if inadvertently, Lord Sinclair, which I hastily corrected to Mr. Sinclair. Then I left Barberry under appointment to be at the hotel two hours later.

Returning to that place, I found Olcott already come back without success. We took a light luncheon and awaited Barberry, to whom, as we agreed, Olcott should now appear my superior. Olcott, for his part, was disposed to send a note to Mary without waiting for the result of our scheme, but, upon reflection, admitted it best not to do so, since, in case the thing should fall into other hands, there was no telling the confusion and trouble that might follow. As for myself, I felt in a good humour at having conducted matters thus far without a mistake.

Barberry came punctually. He had talked, he said, with Mr. Jenkinson's counsel, but not with Jenkinson himself, thinking it better to approach the principal in a diplomatic manner, besides secretly hoping, no doubt, to engage in this way the influence commonly possessed by legal advisers over their clients. As a consequence he could already inform us that Jenkinson, having of late years begun to feel his age, was at heart in a mood to dispose of his property. He would demand a high price. Already he had declined the offer of an Ohio syndicate, but this largely because he bitterly disliked one or two of the principal men that composed it.

There was a chance, in short, for negotiation. What he should advise was that we repair to the office of Judge Steele, Jenkinson's counsel, disclose our purpose in a general way, and count upon that gentleman's prevailing upon Jenkinson to remain in the city a day or

two until the parties on both sides could see whether it was worth while to spend any further time on negotiations.

With considerable affectation of indifference Olcott assented, so we were soon at the offices of Judge Steele.

CHAPTER XL

THE AFFAIR CONTINUED

JUDGE STEELE was one of that new species of practitioners who, by no means profound in legal science, and, for that matter, very indifferent towards study as mere vulgar drudgery, attain eminence by reason of their being what is called business lawyers, that is to say, persons whom men of affairs consult to get not so much law as cool business advice with a legal turn. Among the failings of this class can by no means be reckoned an ignorance of human nature, which, on the contrary, is the very thing they best understand. As soon as we were introduced to this counsellor, accordingly, I perceived we were regarded with shrewdness.

The voluble Barberry having begun the talk with much pleasantry, the Judge remarked that he had already considered some intimations of our business. However, he hoped nobody would, in our conversation, be regarded as representing anybody. For his part, he had no authority to speak for any person at all. He was, however, what might be called receptive. He would like to hear any suggestions, if any one cared to offer any.

All this being uttered very coolly, I, for my part, would hardly have known what to say, but Olcott was far from being ill at ease.

"I trust, Judge Steele," said he, "that the persons with whom we are talking are such as the interests I represent can feel are entirely confidential."

This, coming from him in a manner comparable only to that of a young Rothschild, had an excellent effect. The Judge replied that everything should be so regarded, Barberry adding that his own firm made a specialty of being confidential.

"In the first place, then," continued Olcott, "what we wish to know is whether the people of Columbus are fair towards capital, particularly towards capital from abroad?"

As to this he was at once assured by both the others that there was no fairer community towards capital anywhere to be found than Columbus, and particularly Ohio in general, the laws of which were exquisitely contrived to shield capital from the people.

"When you speak of laws," resumed Olcott, "I may remark that we have not yet selected our solicitors here."

This was a happy touch by no means lost upon Judge Steele, who, with an eye to the future, observed very urbanely that the selecting of counsel would, of course, be a matter requiring deliberation.

"For the present, Judge," continued my clever companion, "we should feel quite at ease in accepting your ideas on such subjects as we go along, because of the high standing you enjoy in Columbus."

"Thank you, gentlemen," replied Steele. "I shall endeavour to merit your confidence."

"Now, while, as Mr. Barberry explained to you at the outset, we are the mere advance representatives of

certain foreign interests, it is not necessary to describe those interests in detail just at present."

"By no means. Not at all," responded the Judge.

"And, to be brief, being here to report as fully as possible on the opportunities for a new pipe plant of great magnitude, we received the happy suggestion of Mr. Barberry concerning the Jenkinson works. Now, if this question can be of interest to the Jenkinsons, well and good. If not, we know what to do."

"Exactly," observed Barberry.

"I understand you very clearly," the Judge added gravely.

After a short pause, the legal gentleman continued:

"As you are perhaps aware, I have long enjoyed the confidence of Mr. Jenkinson. In fact, I may say, able man though he is, he has of late years scarcely been willing to take the smallest step without my advice. There was that investment at Akron—entirely on my responsibility—inch by inch. Then I was very successful, perhaps I ought to say merely lucky, you know, in that provoking fight over the Smith patents, in which, to do them justice, Griggs and Dodge did give me a hard tussle in court—able gentlemen generally. So, in a word, I think I can speak with some assurance of Mr. Jenkinson's real views."

He paused here to compress his lips and slightly contract his brows.

"Mr. Jenkinson is not so young as he was."

Nobody disputing this, he added:

"And, I may say, he knows it."

"Exactly," said Barberry.

"Now, I commit no breach of confidence when I say," the Judge went on, "that Mr. Jenkinson is sev-

eral years older than any one in this office at the present moment. The consequence is the man is tired. He wants to drop business. He has only one child, is ready to go abroad, would have done so long ago if he could have torn himself away from that office, and, unless I personally induce him to remain, he will start to San Francisco to-night. Now, he has had offers enough for the plant, of course, but, the fact is, these offers have thus far proceeded from sources extremely disagreeable to Mr. Jenkinson and not to be considered. To-day he will sell, yes, but at a high figure. It will cost money. Don't ask me to name any sum. All I can say is that if you gentlemen are prepared to take an option on the plant at the highest market price, pay for that option a reasonable forfeit to hold it during inspection of the properties, say twenty thousand dollars, Mr. Jenkinson will, I cannot say, execute papers for a sale at once, but will remain to consider the matter fully. In other words, if your people would, if we should agree on a total purchase price, pay for the option some such amount, the option to be only long enough for a *bona fide* inspection, I think Mr. Jenkinson will remain."

"This sounds very business like," replied Olcott, coolly, though all the rest of us were regarding him with expectation. "This is precisely the way these things should be approached. My people don't want to trifle with anybody, and, I desire to say, they don't want anybody to trifle with them. Suppose we see Mr. Jenkinson at once."

"Perhaps," replied the Judge, "I had better open the subject to him a little myself beforehand. Let us meet here at four o'clock. Is it agreeable?"

Having all agreed to this, Olcott and I went back to the hotel, and, notwithstanding some misgivings, returned at four o'clock to the law offices, where, within twenty minutes, Steele came, followed by no less a person than Jenkinson himself. The old gentleman appeared past sixty, or, at least, at that period when men have some curiosity why their friends are dropping off so fast and what the diseases are that cause obituary notices. He was, though, strong and hearty enough, and, having risen to fortune from the ranks of a workman, he had a blunt, gruff manner of speech that indicated he generally had his own way without debate.

"Well," said he, "you English send young men to the front the same as we do over here. Now, gentlemen, this is a busy day with Tom Jenkinson. Are you here to talk business?"

"We are, Mr. Jenkinson," replied Olcott, with perfect assurance, "provided there is any use of talking business."

"Well, for that matter," responded the old man, "I always said that anything of mine is for sale, except my wife and daughter, provided my price is named. I'm not holding any property for love or affection."

"Exactly," remarked Barberry.

"I heard some time ago," Jenkinson continued, "that the English were nosing about Pittsburg for pipe plants, so I rather guessed we'd have them here."

"Now," said Olcott, in his most cold business-like manner, "there's no use of taking up each other's time unnecessarily. As you Americans say, business is business."

"Exactly," said Barberry.

"That's what it is," said Jenkinson.

"And to bring this thing to a head, Mr. Jenkinson, I will say just here that, if you will name us a price, we will pay a reasonable sum for an option during inspection. You can think this matter over. We have no desire to hurry you. On the other hand, we should like to have your decision by to-morrow noon. Take till to-morrow noon, Mr. Jenkinson."

With this he arose to go, having undoubtedly played his empty hand in the finest possible manner, so every eye turned towards Jenkinson. We began to go to the door, fully convinced we had won the delay of a day, when the old gentleman exclaimed:

"Here, I might as well say, without further fooling, that you can have my price this minute. I've had to have such figures in my head for some time, lately. You can have my plant for two millions and not a dollar less."

This placed Olcott in a bad situation, for it was hard to decide how to get further delay, whether Jenkinson would allow delay more readily on the excuse of haggling over the price or on the excuse of our wanting a day in which to pay the deposit. But the fellow was equal to any embarrassment.

"Agreed, Mr. Jenkinson," he responded. "Two millions is the price, for the general character of your plant is better known to us than you are probably aware. But the deposit must be reasonable."

"Thirty thousand dollars," Jenkinson replied.

"Agreed again," said Olcott. "I presume Judge Steele can have the necessary papers ready by to-morrow noon."

"To-day's the day," answered the old man, who, like

most vendors, now began to regret his having sold at all, or his not having asked a higher price.

"It's after banking hours," replied Olcott, a little nonplussed, but not out of countenance.

"I should think to-morrow noon would be not unreasonable," suggested Steele.

"Well, these fellows say they know already what they are buying, so I'm not hurrying them too much. Besides, I'm all ready to leave town. I want to know that business is business. Not meaning any offense, I don't know these young gentlemen from Adam."

Upon this Olcott, with consummate art, counterfeited a somewhat injured air, bowed pleasantly to all, and moved towards the door.

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen," he said, "for having taken your time unnecessarily. I think we had as well drop this business. I mean no unkindness to Mr. Jenkinson, one of your leading citizens, when I say that as we are not asking something for nothing, his precipitateness in a matter of such magnitude amounts to a reflection on myself and my associate, Mr. Boggs, wholly unnecessary at this stage of the proceedings. I am willing to pay the deposit by to-morrow noon, that is to say, less than twenty-four hours. The amount is not serious, of course, but excuse me if I say that I would incur the censure of my principals if, before paying it, I did not have the services of Judge Steele here or some other eminent counsel to draft the terms of the option."

"Oh, here now," exclaimed Jenkinson, who saw his two millions, an excessive price, vanishing. "I meant no offense, you know. What do you say, Judge? To-morrow noon? But not an hour longer. I'm sick.

I want to get away. Mary and her mother all upset, too."

The general terms of the option were then pleasantly discussed, so that Steele could have the paper ready the next morning.

"I suppose I'm a damned fool to sell this plant. You fellows are getting a great bargain. But I've made up my mind long ago to sell. That gang of Baxom's could have had it long ago if they had only been white men. They've been wanting it bad enough."

With this all went downstairs, where we moistened ourselves with a drink or two.

"You're the cleanest-cut pair of Englishmen I ever saw," said the old man, who probably had never seen half a dozen Britons of our pretended class before. "Now, I'll tell you—suppose you both pay me a call this evening. You're strangers, you know, and the people in the West like to be hospitable. You're a pretty fine pair of youngsters."

"You are extremely kind," replied Olcott. "Either I or Mr. Boggs will be pleased to do so."

"Good!" cried Jenkinson, much pleased with Olcott; "be sure to come."

We could scarcely refrain from hugging each other in our happiness, while I, for my part, regarded Olcott as a prodigy. Regaling ourselves with more good liquor, we resolved that, as it might be too great a surprise to Mary if Olcott should go to Jenkinson's, I should go alone, get a word in her ear in some way or other, and arrange that she fly from her father's house at daybreak in order to catch with Olcott an early train that passed through Columbus on its way to Toledo.

"This leaves the final success of this business with

you, Cameron, so keep as cool as possible in that house to-night."

With that he scribbled a note to Mary by way of giving me proper letters plenipotentiary, nor did ever ambassador set out on his mission with more pride than I.

Stepping out of the hotel, I was about to take a carriage, when a voice accosting me as "Mr. Cameron. If you please, sir," I turned and beheld Conners at my elbow.

"I have been thinking a matter over, sir, since you spoke to me in the rooms, sir, and have concluded it to be my duty, sir, everything being otherwise made right, to make myself known."

Delighted to have the man change his humour, I was about to avail myself of it, when it flashed across my mind that to avow myself Cameron was to imperil Olcott at the most critical stage of our business, so I desperately determined to deny myself.

"My name is Boggs-Jones, no, Jones-Boggs, fellow," I cried, getting into a cab and driving rapidly away. My only course was, I thought, to ignore him just now. His residence being now known to me, I could afford to wait a day or two.

CHAPTER XLI

SUCCESS OF THE AFFAIR

WITH a fair degree of self-possession I betook myself at eight o'clock to the Jenkinsons', where I was received cordially by both the parents. The mother I found to be vulgar, purse-proud, and of no acquaintance with the world as yet through travel or elegant company, the fortune of the family being, in fact, extremely recent even in the West. The old fool, having a mind to appear younger than she was, endeavoured to conceal several obstinate wrinkles as well as those lines on the side of the neck, which are even a more certain indication of age. The news that an Englishman was coming had spurred both her attire and her grammar, but the latter was not to be kept long beneath any veneer. The couple got on well together, as I subsequently learned, for old Jenkinson was man enough to have his own way and his lady, at her best, so plain she had to be virtuous.

We talked a short time on trifles, and the old lady mentioning, what she knew nothing about, that my grammar was not English in so marked a degree as was commonly to be noticed, I glibly protected myself, remarking that my mother had been a native of the States. At this old Jenkinson expressed a hearty approval, vowing he had been sure of something of the

sort all the while, but the old lady plainly thought the less of me by reason of this misfortune, while I myself was in no position, being a Briton, to express my regret at a poor American ingredient in my blood.

Meanwhile, being desperately uneasy lest I should get no glimpse of the daughter, I was about to be so bold as to lead up to that subject, when the damsel came in, a somewhat buxom girl of eighteen, with her father's strong will in her face. She had in some degree that shortness of neck which, at least in a man, is so good a sign. That she was in no sweet humour was plain, for she gave little response to my attempts at conversation. In fact, I was soon at the end of my string, for, of course, I could find few pretexts to prolong my stay.

However, there joined us several persons who came to say good-bye to the family, and in the little confusion this occasioned I contrived to get close enough to Mary to whisper the name of Olcott while slipping his note into her hand. Though, as Tony Lumpkin would say, her cheeks were as broad and red as a pulpit-cushion, the girl grew redder than before, even concealing her excitement by stepping back a pace or two into a large curtained window.

Managing her part with considerable composure, she speedily suggested to her parents a desire to have me see the drawing-room, which contained a number of pictures, and as soon as we had withdrawn to it, her eyes eagerly devoured the note. That communication, beyond the usual outpourings of love, contained no more than that the elopement be arranged through me. I accordingly told her on what train we hoped to have her go.

"Tell him," said the girl, without a particle of fear, "tell him that I'll be there."

Delighted at the success of my agency, I returned with her to the company, found a speedy excuse to be off, and was soon in the presence of Olcott, with whom I exchanged congratulations, including the loudest praise of each other's guilefulness. Each was sure that the other had a masterful mind. Together we were clearly invincible.

Having made every arrangement during the night, we were up by dawn and at the station. Punctually at six the faithful virgin hurried into the waiting-room, removing, whilst she ran into the arms of Olcott, a veil that at first concealed her blooming features. As for myself, as if the whole affair were under my management, and with an air of proprietorship in the young couple, I busied myself with a few small matters for our journey. With much importance I applied to the window for tickets, when, to my despair, I learned that, by reason of a wreck, our train would not come in or go out until noon. At this sorry news the lovers were beside themselves with alarm. There was certain to be a hue and cry at the Jenkinsons' by eight o'clock.

While we were in this dilemma, for no other train that would at all serve our turn was to depart until eleven o'clock, and that for Cincinnati, I was surprised beyond measure to run into no less a person than Senator Baxom, followed by his spouse. After some ejaculations, by no means unpleasant, at this meeting, the Senator begged I would excuse his hurrying off, as he had an imperative call to return to his home at Toledo, had counted on the early train, and had been compelled to engage a special car and locomotive.

"Damn these railroads!" cried the Senator. "I never knew one of them to be on time in my life."

In a moment I threw myself upon his mercy. Telling him of the eloping couple, I begged most fervently that he take us with him.

"Good God, my boy!" cried the Senator. "This is a delicate business. I have a daughter of my own and would feel like killing a fellow for stealing her in this sort of way."

"Senator," I said, "let me bring them to you. Don't leave us in this difficulty. Please don't."

"But, Cameron, my boy," replied the Senator, "it's a devil of a piece of meddling you propose for me. Furnishing private cars and special trains for runaway couples."

"It's very serious indeed, Mr. Cameron," exclaimed Mrs. Baxom, who was generally the most imperturbable of women.

"But old Jenkinson will be after us in a minute, Senator," I cried.

"What's that? What name did you say?" the Senator asked, in a new tone.

"Jenkinson," I replied, "old Jenkinson, the pipe man. He'll ruin all our work unless you lend a hand."

"Now, damn him!" responded the Senator. "I know the old rascal these twenty years. What's his reason, I'd like to know, for interfering with them? Is he her father, did you say? Isn't she old enough to know her own mind?"

"Let us see the young couple. Where are they?" asked Mrs. Baxom.

Not until some time later did I learn that there had long been a political feud between Jenkinson and

Baxom, both members of the same party, but of different factions, for, while Jenkinson wanted no place for himself, he had aided friends who unsuccessfully aspired. The bitterest political quarrels are such as occur within a party itself, these being of a family sort and not to be forgiven because attended with peculiar felicity of taunt and insult.

"Upon my word," cried Mrs. Baxom, after a few words with Mary, "Miss Jenkinson seems to know her mind."

"I don't see, Mrs. Baxom," the Senator added, "why a sensible-looking girl like this shouldn't be permitted to choose for herself. It's little less than criminal to interfere between young couples. Here, get aboard with us, you young rascals. God! I enjoy this business myself! Opposing his own daughter! I never heard of anything like it in my life."

CHAPTER XLII

THE MAN CONNERS

FORTUNATE in adversity are they who by some chance make an enemy of one having bitter foes, for such persons shall no longer go begging for aid. If you would get assistance from one who is under small obligation to render it, discover beforehand whom he hates. Compel his enemies to oppose you and henceforth he is your friend. Most men will do more out of revenge than out of affection.

Thus it was in the present instance. The Baxoms could not do enough for us to satisfy their zeal. A fine breakfast was served, plans were laid for the wedding in Toledo, and the young couple were to be launched like millionaires.

"Why, that old devil, Jenkinson, never could treat anybody right, Mr. Cameron," the Senator observed apart to me. "For years he has been throwing himself in the way of my friends in Columbus, notwithstanding the best business reasons were offered him why he should keep out of the way. Whenever a man rejects a fair business argument, Cameron, there's something wrong. He's either an infernal fool or dishonest. Now, Jenkinson is no fool. My friends offered to buy him off, as he was wanting no office himself, and keep him out of politics, offered to buy two or three pieces of worthless property from him at a high price by way

of peace, but he refused to get out and sell. The fellow's not honest. There's some crooked reason behind it all. Asked two millions for his plant, did he? Not worth half as much. Imposing on two inexperienced boys like you!"

Particularly was he pleased at our deceiving Steele.

"Waiting for his fee this morning, I suppose, the old grafter. He's another of the same sort. Two of a kind, Cameron."

To make a short story, the marriage occurred that day in Toledo, whence a message was dispatched to the parents announcing the nuptials, together with the departure of the pair to New York. The Senator, deeply pleased at what he felt was in great part his own work, lauded Olcott and myself to the skies. He gave the former a letter to a friend prominent in Wall Street, to whom he described him as a young person of "singularly manly and enterprising character."

"You boys," he said at the station, "must come to Washington next winter. That pretense of being English capitalists is the prettiest bit of work I've seen in twenty years. We need you lads, I tell you, in matters of a more general and public sort. You must get out of this reporting business. Remember, now, I can give you something more profitable down at Washington when Congress meets."

It is a doubly fortunate circumstance that a man should assist you, since you get not only that service, but his desire to perform another, for there is no safer maxim of human conduct to rely upon than the one laid down long ago by Machiavelli, that men think more of those to whom they have rendered favours than of those from whom they have received them.

You may easily imagine my pride in being the means of extricating the Olcotts from their embarrassing plight in so elegant a manner. The grateful girl thanked me a hundred times, while Olcott swore his obligations to me were everlasting. Few are the situations in life more pleasing to recall than such as these, in which youth renders us so ready to sacrifice everything for friendship and all our sentiments are sincere.

On my mind all the while was the man Conners, whom, even in the hurry of departure from Columbus, I had vainly endeavoured to see again. Judge, then, my surprise, when, as I was about to take the train at Toledo with no better hope than to have him approached later by the Senator, I beheld the fellow himself at the station getting off a train that had just come in from Columbus. I followed him until I overheard him ask a porter about the next train for Albany.

Something, I felt, was brewing, or perhaps he had heard of my uncle's illness. After a few moments I accosted him.

"Conners," said I, "first let me have a word with you."

"Conners, did you say, sir?" he inquired with perfect face.

"Yes—you understand, Conners. I am Mr. Cameron, as you perceived at Columbus."

"I beg your pardon, sir. I thought I remembered a name like Joggs-Bones or the like," he replied, making sport of my assumed name.

"No matter for that, Conners, I——"

"If you'll excuse me, sir, my name's not Conners," he replied, leaving me half insolently, with some new purpose in his skull.

For the present I gave him up, nor will the reader fail to observe the singularity of our memories, each of us being unable to recall his own name whenever the other could remember his.

At first I was disposed to get off at Albany myself, but this, I felt, would do no good, as these people could be sufficiently watched by other eyes in my interest. Besides, I felt I ought to pass a half a day at my old home, while on my way.

CHAPTER XLIII

MY OLD HOME

IT was Sunday morning when, after the absence of nearly a year, I visited the scenes of my boyhood. Little had I fancied that in so short a time everything should appear changed where nothing had been altered. It is a peculiarity of memory to magnify the distance between objects, though no lapse of years can efface their details. The garden now seemed small which in recollection had grown large, while all the village houses which I remembered as having some space between them and the street now fronted closely on the highway. Thus the little town lost dignity in my eyes, unconscious, as I was, that the greatest change was in myself.

Soon there broke the morning stillness the simple peal of the church bell, and, before visiting my old preceptor, I stole into a back seat, where the near-sighted old fellow could not see me, and where I might listen unobserved to his drowsy discourse. It moved me to hear those kindly tones again. I joined with feeling in the responses, which combine the precepts of Christian faith with the utmost felicity of English expression, music adding its influence in the sweet chant of the choir.

No sooner was the service concluded than I hurried

to the vestry. The good man had not yet had time to remove his surplice.

"Charles, my boy," he cried, "is it possible you are here?"

"Here indeed, Mr. Aiken," I replied, almost moved to tears to see such simple honesty again after so worldly a year. We all but embraced each other.

"I know not what kind inspiration caused me to select my text this morning, it was so well suited to your coming. You heard it all, did you, Charles?"

"Every word of it, though it was much too short."

"Thank you, Charles, thank you. I appreciate it all the more because, of course, you now hear every Sunday in the metropolis men of far greater eloquence than mine. Thank heaven, your spiritual welfare will not be neglected by those great divines."

Then we repaired to his house in company with his plump little wife, who straightway bestirred herself in hospitality. While she was preparing the good cheer, the old gentleman and I discussed my former life in the village.

"After all, though, Charles," said the good man, "your father's taking off was not untimely. His mind began to fail."

At this I expressed surprise.

"Yes, it was so, my boy," he continued. "Indeed, I began to fear the gentle fellow might outlive his mental faculties. You know, his seat at church was almost under the pulpit, so that I could see him quite plainly, yet in the last year or two I could perceive that, even in the most interesting parts of my sermons, his eye would wander off."

"What!" I exclaimed. "Even in the most interesting——"

"Yes, Charles, even at the most interesting portions an absent expression would creep into your dear father's face."

"A bad sign, Mr. Aiken," said I.

"Yes," he replied. "Age will have these effects on some. For my own part, God has seen fit even to add, I hope, to my own powers of mind, such as they are."

Such I assured him was visibly the case.

"I never heard you with more pleasure in my life," I exclaimed. "And now, tell me, how are you getting on with your book?"

"Alas, I have added only three chapters, my boy, since you left us, only three or four, but a new edition of Catullus is so demanded in all parts of the world to-day that I can well afford to do the subject justice. Mr. Buecheler's edition, as you know, is very defective, for he based it too much on the manuscript Sangermanensis. It is too much the fashion nowadays to discredit the theories of the early commentators such as Scaliger. Besides the interesting constructions I used to mention to you, I have added already several that will be very entertaining, I am confident. The metres, I find, I shall have to make the subject of a special volume. I have no doubt you found great interest in these studies in New York, Charles?"

"Very great, indeed," I answered. "Your Catullus will be welcome."

"Thank you, Charles," the simple man replied. "Sometimes I fear I have neglected a duty in remaining in this somewhat narrow field, when I might have cut some figure in the great city. However, my book will

afford a good introduction, should I ever deem it wise to seek that field."

After the dinner, which was served about two, I wandered to the village cemetery, devoting to my mother's memory a few solitary moments by her grave. Strange course of human life, which can admit of worldly ambition when everything about us reminds us of the tomb! Unaccountable delusion that makes life appear long when a thousand melancholy proofs remind us that it is only a passing dream. The hearse that bears away a parent does not alarm, however much it may grieve, the offspring, to whom longevity has no expiration. Generation following generation, the successive multitudes cultivate harvests on the bones of forgotten peoples and consume primeval man. Where are they now who wept or laughed in Babylon or Assyria? What folly, that they should ever have grieved or rejoiced in their petty lives, whose cities, now blended with the dust of their kings and their beggars, are blown by the four winds and buried beneath impenetrable sands! Yet here, in a village, ambition contends with ambition. Here in a country churchyard pride, separating itself from the graves of the humble, will not be given to the worms except in fine company.

Twilight came on before I quitted a spot in which memory paid to the most sacred of ties the last of my tears. The world had not yet made me sordid or wholly selfish, but it had raised in me as to the uses of human existence, the teachings of religion, and the immortality of the soul those doubts so fatal to tranquillity of mind. A mound of earth like this must be, I reflected, my own lot, too. Why should I hope to rise from that cold bed again? Generations interred before me in this

very spot were still expecting the call that all ages had been expecting but no age had ever heard. Mystery inscrutable! Billions of thinking beings during thousands upon thousands of years had tortured their wits in vain to find an answer. By the Ganges, the Niger and the Mississippi the universal voice of mankind in prayer and sacrifice has begged the heavens to reveal a visible God, yet the eternal secret remains. Neither philosophy nor science has added in countless ages a single demonstration of another life, nor faith nor pious supplication brought back one soul to tell us of our heaven.

CHAPTER XLIV

MY UNCLE'S DEATH

WHEN I arrived in New York I found the Olcotts the happiest of mortals in a suite of rooms plainly above their means, though sufficiently inferior to their inclinations to leave them the pleasure of economy even in extravagance. We had several happy dinners, the more joyous because the Senator's letter had already obtained the attractive Olcott a good place in Wall Street. Meanwhile, not a word came from the Jenkinsons except a few lines of reproach from the mother, who vowed the young pair had broken her heart.

I was none too busy as a reporter to keep an eye on Albany. Of Conners, though, I could learn nothing, notwithstanding careful inquiry was made for me by a friendly reporter in that city. Meanwhile a chat with Lillian threw no other light on affairs than that my uncle was very ill, nor should I have had further concern about her relations with him, had I not felt from her manner instead of her words that in some degree or other the old rake had entrusted something to her control. The beauty's good nature never failed her in her talks, so it was impossible to become vexed with her secrecy.

But how can I forget that eventful afternoon, just a

few days later, when, while I was actually in conversation with her, our eyes happened to light on the headlines of an early edition of an evening newspaper. My uncle had died two hours before!

"My God!" exclaimed Lillian.

For a few moments neither of us could say a word, as we slowly raised our eyes.

"Charles," she said quickly, "go, dear man, go home! I can't tell you why I would rather not talk. Go, dear boy, at once. Let us wait and see the result of it all."

Certainly she was deeply affected, so I left her at once, while I searched the newspapers for further tidings as I rushed along the streets. Of his will nothing was yet stated.

What should I do? To go to Albany was probably to make myself a laughing-stock. It was impossible that any will he might have made years ago in my favour, supposing Conners' report to be true, had survived his subsequent detestation of me.

The only thing to do was to wait, which I did, with little sleep. To hang between poverty and riches is a woeful balance.

But, great joy at last, there came a telegram from the dead man's lawyers requiring my presence. No will had been found. They would not say that all hope of finding one had been given up, but so little probability remained that I must come at once as heir.

Olcott becoming now my chief adviser, we repaired to Albany. The funeral had already occurred and the fruitless search for the will was continued. With some hypocrisy I made suggestions in aid of the others, though ready to die of disappointment if anything should come of my advice, for, as everybody about the

old gentleman in his lifetime had more reason than I to induce his making a will and to preserve it when made, and as they had, at all events, nothing to gain by his dying intestate, I had let myself become pretty sanguine because no will had already turned up.

Nothing could exceed the deference I began to experience from everybody connected with the estate, even from old Maria Dole, who split her hard face from time to time in cold smiles that did not deceive me a moment. Her disappointment, it was plain, was equal to my elation.

The next day or two after my arrival all of us, including the servants, were called to the office of Messrs. Workman & Sham, counsel for my uncle while he lived. These gentlemen, desirous of finding the will if it existed, were at the same time desirous of offending nobody who might succeed to the estate. In examining the familiars of the household they were, therefore, exceedingly polite, leaning, however, in my direction already, as everything indicated my succession.

"I am free to say," said Workman, "that our office, about three years ago, prepared a will for Mr. Cameron, but whether he ever executed it or not I can't recall."

"Those are my recollections in the matter," added Sham.

"Well, if he went to the expense of having you draw his will, why shouldn't he execute it?" asked Maria.

"Upon my word, Mrs. Dole, I can't answer as to that," replied Workman.

"You were his legal advisers, weren't you, lawyers in his pay to see that everything was done right?" continued the woman.

"Certainly, ma'am, certainly," the lawyer answered.

"Then why don't you know whether he executed it or not?" she asked.

"The matter was too delicate, entirely too delicate, for us to press——"

"Oh, I suppose there'll be more lawsuits this way," retorted the angry Dole, beginning at last to lose her temper and much disliking the friendly glances I received from eminent counsel.

"Now, madam," replied Workman, "that kind of talk will have to cease."

"Well, you know as well as I do that I was remembered in the will that was drawn in this very office, don't you?" cried the lady. "Answer that, now."

"On that score, madam," answered Workman, "we have nothing to say. If there is no will, what might have been put in it is of no importance. If there is one, it will speak for itself."

"There, now, you don't deny it—but, no matter, I guess I can hire lawyers to do my talking. I'll have you gentlemen give your testimony in the proper place. All I have to say is that George Cameron told me not a month before he died that I was down in his will for something plenty, me and the servants here that had stood by him all his life, and that he hadn't kin in the world that was to have a dollar, much less these smooth young people here from New York."

She was now in a considerable heat, unable, in fact, to control herself. The servants also viewed me with unfriendly looks, so, both from policy and kindness, I stated that I should be happy indeed to see that those who had been faithful to my uncle should not lose by it.

"Oh, it's to be charity, is it?" exclaimed Maria. "I'll

have you understand, Mr. Cameron, all we want after these years is what belongs to us."

"That's what I say," muttered the footman, while the butler, a trifle cautious, declared he wanted no more from any man than what was right.

"How much did Mr. Cameron say he had left you, Mrs. Dole?" inquired Olcott.

"I'll answer that, young man, when you tell me what business it is of yours," retorted she, and for the first time in my life I saw Olcott in confusion.

However, recovering himself quickly, he said: "All I care to say is that I feel I express Mr. Cameron's desires here in saying that these servants are going to be remembered. I mean all the servants, including Mrs. Dole."

"Oh, you put me in with the servants, thank you," cried Maria, deeply enraged.

Here she made a bad mistake, for nobody is regarded with more discontent than a housekeeper by the servants beneath her, so the butler voiced the general dissent of allies so useful to her in case of litigation, saying:

"I'll be obliged to you, Mrs. Dole, if you'll not be drawing distinctions here, which is not in business hours and none of us on duty."

Quick to see her mistake, she cried:

"I tell you I know what was in that will, and you were remembered in it the same as myself, you that are so eager to listen to this smooth talk."

But the butler was now pleased to show his ability in debate as a man of the world.

"Just leave these matters to me. I'm able to take care of myself a bit, I flatter me."

"Don't you see you're only a child in their hands?" she cried.

"Well, I like that," sneered the man. "Humph! I'll have you bear in mind I'm just as good a scholar as yourself, Maria Dole."

This last presumption of calling her by her mere name so enraged the woman that she all but screamed, for in adversity, as nothing touches our hearts more than fidelity in servants, so nothing more exasperates us than their impudence when they see us stripped of power. For a moment we feared she would strike him. Then without another word she flung the door behind her and was gone.

CHAPTER XLV

MY MILLIONS

VERY glad to be rid of her, we continued our talk, the servants pleased to see somebody humbled who had been above them before, and quite hopeful of compensation from me, who was now accepted as certainly the heir. The search was resumed, to be sure, everything turned upside-down wherever the least possibility was imagined of finding the document, but after a week it was officially announced that, the deceased leaving no will, administration would be had, that I should be the administrator, and after a year or the like possess the millions entirely as the exclusive heir.

We immediately gave the servants a small present, saying we should do better when the estate was distributed. As for Maria, we had no occasion to dismiss her, since she removed her effects in advance. I saw, though, that she would give us such trouble as she could.

My apprehensions were not made easier by my being approached, before I returned to New York, by the discreet Connors, who had generally avoided all of us, and whose looks now became exceedingly knowing.

"Oh, you're Connors now, are you?" I asked.

"Yes, sir," he answered as coolly as usual, "and I

believe I have the honour, sir, to be addressing Mr. Cameron?"

"No matter about that, Conners. What do you want?"

I felt confident, because the will this man was supposed to know of was in my favour, though the matter troubled me.

The creature then fell to mysterious hints of his usefulness, intimating that there was no reason why poor men should impart valuable information, any more than valuable services, without valuable consideration.

"Look here, Conners," I said, "I know already from Senator Baxom that a will you pretend to have seen bequeathed me all this property. You said that, didn't you, now?"

"I don't remember, sir, ever saying any such thing. No, sir. I can't help thinking, sir, you mightn't be too well pleased with what I did see."

Determined not to be blackmailed, I left him with a determination that he should be watched. As soon as I was again in New York, with an hour to spare, I hastened to see Lillian, whose humour in this situation was unknown to me, inasmuch as she had not in the least degree evinced curiosity or broken silence. She, at least, I was now quite sure, expected nothing.

She rallied me pleasantly.

"Oh, brother Charles," she exclaimed, "you're happy at last? Well! You're not afraid of bugaboo Lillian any longer, are you—the scheming Lillian, the wicked Lillian? Lord! what monsters we women of the stage are supposed to be!"

"But, Lillian," I responded, "laugh as you will, you

beautiful, clever thing, you did know something, you do know something now—this minute, don't you?"

"I know, pretty Charlie," said she, "that Hanborough's new play for me is a wonder. I believe it will turn the town crazy. Why don't you write, too, Charles? No, anything I know about your uncle's affairs will do you no harm."

This was the most I could learn, and I was satisfied.

CHAPTER XLVI

DEPARTURE TO EUROPE

IMAGINE, if you can, the manner in which I endeavoured to bear myself in so much good fortune. The possession of money gave me a new importance, reflected immediately in the demeanour of everybody towards me, even in that of the Olcotts.

Striving to be cool, I was, nevertheless, a good deal turned in my head. While I had no cash that I could call my own, I had, especially in Albany, a first-class credit. In New York everybody liked to see me spending money. One could live only once, they said; why should one save money to leave to others after one's death? Tailors particularly lauded these epicurean maxims, and I had no less than twenty suits of clothes in the first month. Passing most of my time in New York, I extravagantly maintained the house in Albany, where grocers, butchers and wine vendors bowed to receive my orders magnificently, as well as wastefully, given by the fat butler. No class of people are more contemptible than small tradesmen. When you pay promptly they cannot look higher ~~than~~ your knees; when you are in arrears they become insolent about people who are living beyond their means; but when you pay again, even though they know you will soon be in further arrears, they laud your fine taste and en-

courage your extravagant orders only to insult you on some later day.

All this happiness soon attracted both notice and envy. The newspapers had full accounts of my good luck, with photographs that were said to be true. My inheritance of about three millions was sometimes six, sometimes ten, and never three millions. The world of fashion, affecting to regard my money as no added charm, was pleased to remember me now by reason of the fine blood I came of and my polished manners. Many smart young gentlemen I had met during my services to Mrs. Oldworth were kind enough to have the most particular recollection of me and to have been wondering all the while where I had been so foolish as to obscure myself from the world. Everybody liked me. Mothers of stupid daughters had been panting all summer to know me. Would I be at Cairo next winter? Surely I would spend a month at Nice. I discovered, too, that I was very witty, could win applause in my dullest mood. I adopted languid oaths and became famous for tips. In my rising elegance I met again the circle around Mrs. Oldworth, having occasional chats with her, but hesitating somewhat to attempt intimacy again. Trixy, fortunately, was out of town.

All these fine associations might have removed me above Olcott, but that youth had been by no means inactive. Turning to account every influence he had, including my own exaggerated resources and the reputed wealth of his father-in-law, he got advantages in a broker's office sufficient to make one day an inordinate profit of about fifty thousand dollars. With this, which was, of course, to be but the beginning of mil-

lions, he entered upon all the extravagance of a successful financier.

A pretty pair we were. After a gluttonous dinner we would smoke expensive cigars while discussing affairs before the admiring Mary in the manner sometimes of dashing young men of fashion, sometimes of thoughtful captains of industry.

"Now, I don't believe, Olcott, in extravagance. A fellow must cut according to his cloth. Some men in my situation would lose their heads, spending, say, half a million in his yacht. I'm not that kind of a man. I'll not have the town laughing at me as a fool with money. No, sir! I'm going to be satisfied with a comfortable little craft within two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and I'm not going to have a great, expensive crew on her, either."

This would be applauded by Olcott as showing my characteristic good sense, after which we would fall to discussing details of the vessel and perhaps divide in opinion on some such trifle as the form of my monogram on the glasses, though the keel had not been laid or ordered or I possessed of a dollar to be called my own within a year.

As nothing succeeds like success, Olcott's first venture in the stock market, reported with much exaggeration by Mary to her parents, began to thaw the Jenkinsons apace, so that it was not long before the mother found occasion to shop in New York, where she speedily capitulated to the fascinating Olcott. The old man made, some time later, a more surly surrender, and, in order to reserve some ground of objection, declared he had a very bad opinion of me.

"Hang me!" exclaimed Olcott, "this marrying is the

only way to live, and it's your turn now. The time has come for you to have Betty Sinclair. If you can't get her peaceably, take her by force."

"Olcott," I replied, "the way that old devil of a father treated me settled that business in my mind. I'm going to do that very thing. All I have to do is to say the word to Betty. I know that girl."

"Spoken like a man, Charles," said he. "If she loves you as Mary Jenkinson loved me——"

"Olcott, there's not another man in the world I'd say it to except you, but that dear little woman dotes on me, just dotes on me, you understand, and I'm not going to let her suffer any longer. When I hadn't a dollar in the world she was willing to risk everything for me. Now it's my turn to help the little girl. I'll not let any woman fret herself to death under the impression that a man has been ungrateful."

These sentiments, communicated to Mary, who infinitely enjoyed them, ended in my arranging that autumn, upon money borrowed like the rest of my recently acquired funds, a short trip to France in order to see Betty, from whom I had not had a word since her departure. Through Mrs. Oldworth I learned her exact address, though it was agreed my coming should be kept a secret, both to afford Betty a sweet surprise and to keep the matter from her parents, as to whose humour towards me we were uncertain, notwithstanding the notoriety of my good fortune.

The day before my sailing I called to say good-bye to Mrs. Oldworth, who, as I have said, was forgetting my blunder, and who disquieted me greatly by a bit of news.

"You are starting, Mr. Cameron, none too soon."

"Why so?" I inquired.

"Betty is to be married."

"Married?"

"Yes, to young Catesby. Her mother so wires from Mentone to her friends at home. To be frank, I don't like it."

I assure you I didn't like it, either, but I kept my chagrin, as far as I could, to myself, even murmuring some commonplace indifference.

My next adieu was to Lillian.

"So Adonis is invading Europe, is he?" she exclaimed, patting me on the cheeks. "Aren't you afraid the bad people will steal your fortune while you're away?"

"Why, Lillian, I'm becoming sensible about this business. Either way I win. If there's no will, it's all mine by law. Now, if there is a will, the only one ever heard of bequeathed practically all to me."

"Here, you're a lucky boy," she exclaimed. "I'll let you kiss me good-bye. Now, don't be greedy! Only here, on the cheek, and just a little one."

With that I hurried away, and was greatly perplexed as I left the entrance of the building to see John Conners making his way to one of the elevators.

On the day of my departure the Olcotts were in high spirits. Mary vowed she would begin that day her preparations to make Betty comfortable. Even the date of our return was agreed on. Moreover, to all my plans the obedience of Betty was reckoned by them and the most sanguine pictures imagined of her emotions at seeing me, for I confess I had been too proud to let them have a hint of Mrs. Oldworth's bad tidings.

At length I set sail and for the first time was out of

the boundaries of my native land. I was deeply anxious to see Betty again. Indeed, the best thing I can recall of myself during that vain period was that not for a moment did I lose my gratitude towards her. In a fair way to be spoiled by the world and to be made selfish with so much false attention, I still had seen enough adversity to remain true to real goodness. Besides, what I had learned from Mrs. Oldworth, though I refused to believe it, stimulated my zeal. I may add that her own silence, which I had never reckoned on as possible towards me, piqued my curiosity in a way extremely serviceable to the god of love.

I was now extremely happy. Everything in the world seemed properly arranged, and, as I looked about, I felt the poor were lucky to be poor in such an age as this. Since then I have learned that there is yet to occur a change in the rights of property among men. I hope this will occur. I wish the world to be thoroughly reformed after I am dead.

CHAPTER XLVII

I AM AT SEA

THERE are few places in which human vanity and conceit are more certain to betray or vaunt themselves than the deck of a fine ocean steamer. For my own part, I was at first disposed to affect an air of exclusive dullness after the manner in vogue nowadays, so different, by the way, from that of the dashing and talkative dandies of the eighteenth century; but the novelty of the voyage so raised my spirits that I could not avoid the rudeness of letting others see that I was enjoying myself.

The place assigned me at the table was according to the fortune rumour had bestowed upon me. I was seated not a great way from the Captain, among several ladies of great fashion and several gentlemen by no means unknown in the world of finance. The ladies, I soon found, were nearly prostrated at having to leave their husbands behind. One of them complained that her spouse was on the verge of nervous prostration from overwork, and another that hers was plainly in a decline, while they agreed that it was far better the poor devils should continue to make money at home while their wives suffered exile in the flowery Riviera. Indeed, they would not have thought of such a thing as leaving their dear husbands if they had not felt it a

positive duty to themselves. One of them had sneezed twice this autumn. The other had found *décolleté* perilous in the harsh climate of New York.

The gentlemen present, as became good Americans, conceded in their opinions what was due to so delicate a race of women as ours, some of whom are occasionally expected even to bear a child. Their own wives were already in Europe, had been there, in fact, the greater part of the year, but they were determined to see a bit of each other now and then. An Englishwoman being asked for her opinion, admitted with some embarrassment, that this was the first time she had ever been separated from her lord, who gave her no vacations except such as he took with her. This causing her husband to be censured and even to be regarded as oppressive, the little woman protested it all came of her not wishing to leave him herself. Finally being put upon her spirit by some hints of being a trifle weak, the good dame vowed such separations as those of American couples were unknown in France, England or Germany, that old-country manners discountenanced them, and that for the most part it is better American women should not discover just how much European wives condemned them for the long absences they took from hard-worked husbands on the plea of their own health or the children's education.

The talk being now in an unamiable current, it was arrested by one of the ladies who had as yet said nothing at all. She was a singularly noble-looking person, a trifle past forty, and richly, though not gaudily, attired.

"I have lived," she said, "a great many years in foreign countries, though an American, as you see, and

with each year I think more sadly of all this travel abroad. It is a bad thing for our own country, it seems to me, no matter whether couples take it singly or together, for we stay so long that finally we do not care to return at all. What makes it worse is the increasing separation of families. What has just been said is true. European women might respect us a good deal more than they do."

Upon this she quitted the table, where the subject was dropped, everybody feeling the truth of what she said, besides some curiosity as to what might be her own situation, for both dignity and sorrow were plain enough in her face. Drawn to her by something which deeply interested me, while I could not explain what it was, I resolved to see her frequently during the journey.

With this in view I would often sit beside her in one of the deck chairs, for it was neither too cold nor too rough to be out of doors in an autumn unusually mild. Not a word betrayed, however, why she was alone or how long she had been in the United States during her brief return. Her home was at Mentone and her name Egerton. No word about either husband or child was let fall. Money she appeared to have in abundance, nor was there any part in the world in which she had not travelled except the interior of Asia and Africa, and she could talk in as many languages as Von Moltke could be silent in.

"You are very kind, Mr. Cameron," said she one day, "to give me so much of your company, when we can see about us a number of young women and girls."

Not attempting the trifling flattery or affectation of sentiment which so dignified a person as she seemed

to be above accepting, I told her simply enough that I was quite sure I had found a friend, as there was something in her features that continually reminded me of some one I had known before.

"It is strange," she replied, "but I have a dozen times had in mind the same idea about you. However, from what you tell me about your life, it is plain I never saw you before."

"Perhaps," I answered, "if you would be as frank with me about yourself I might be able to remember something, but I am sure you will not take amiss my mentioning the fact that you never have given me even a hint of how your life has been spent."

"I don't take it amiss, Mr. Cameron," responded she; "on an ocean voyage the acquaintances of a few days seem as near to us as those of many months ashore, so they have some of their privileges. It is an unhappy subject, though. Perhaps I shall talk to you about myself some day. Don't imagine that you have been too inquisitive. Let us talk meanwhile of Betty."

Of my love affair I had told her all, for she had taken a great interest in it, the more so as, from Betty's being then in the neighbourhood of Mentone, I should have to go there and she might see us together.

CHAPTER XLVIII

ACQUAINTANCE AT SEA

I HAD not been long on the ship before I formed a pleasant acquaintance with a young mining man from Colorado, who was destined to have later a disagreeable part in my life, and who, after a while, informed me that, having recently made a fortune, he had set out to enjoy it. His seat being at another table, he had been thrown in with a mother and daughter, of whom he had already become weary.

"The old fool," said he to me, "has made up her mind that I shall marry that pug-nosed girl, so I get no peace with her attentions. For God's sake, take the pair off my hands."

"Ask me any favour but that, Sanderson," I replied, "and I'll do it. You're certainly in bad luck."

The women were from a town in Western Massachusetts. They were both voluble talkers on topics which men commonly regard with indifference, the affairs of churches, the reform of dress, and the education of the young. With all this sort of thing Sanderson was bored not only at meals, when he sat next to them, but as often on deck as they could waylay him in their efforts to bring his fortune to New England, for it was understood from external circumstances that they had none of their own.

"Curse me!" exclaimed Sanderson one afternoon, "are the girls in New England born old? I never saw one in my life that wasn't past thirty."

"Why don't you unload all this trouble on some other man at your table?" I inquired.

"What kind of a question is that to ask?" he replied. "Do you think there is a fool on board who would take her off my hands?"

After considering some time his having his seat changed and finding no change possible that would be tolerable, we set our wits to working.

"Sanderson," I said, "as these people are simply after your money, they would be after another fellow's just as soon. Suppose we select another man at your table and set them upon him by letting them believe he's immensely rich."

"Well, we might try something of that sort. There's that San Francisco tailor. Let us see how we could make the scheme work."

The tailor he mentioned we knew no more of than that some one had told us such was his occupation. Gustavsen was his name and he had a foreign accent, which led us to the still better plan of making him a German baron. One idea leading to another, it was finally resolved that to Gustavsen we should drop the hint that the girl was very rich, as well as enamoured of him, and to the girl and her mother that Gustavsen was exceedingly anxious to conceal in his travels one of the noblest names in Germany.

Within an hour after this design was conceived the opportunity arose to set it in action. The mother approaching us on deck, I drew her attention to Gustav-

sen, at a distance, with the remark that I supposed she knew all about him.

"Not a word," she replied, "except that the fellow's a tailor or something of that sort."

"My dear Mrs. Smith," I replied, "don't mention it to any one, but I learn in strict confidence that he is in reality Baron von Bomberg of Baden-Baden."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed the lady. "Who started this story of his being only a tailor?"

"He did himself, to get rid of the eternal persecution that goes on in our country by newspaper men and the like."

"I don't blame him," said she. "It's a national evil."

Seeing new graces in his person, she passed some favourable comments, after which the girl inquired whether he had yet been captured by any American family.

"No," I answered. "He has little need to seek American dollars. In point of fact, he is as rich as any of us."

The ladies from this time began to cast upon the tailor many glances that did not fail to cause him to look frequently at them in return, and, this setting the affair properly in motion, I contrived to have with him an occasional word. I confess the fellow was not so flattered by my advances as to make them particularly easy, for, notwithstanding his calling, he had his own notions of his importance, so I had to leave this part of the business to Sanderson, who, knowing him better, was at last able to convey a hint of the damsel's infatuation. This news was received by the other in some indifference.

"Does the young lady understand," he asked, "that I am only a tailor and from San Francisco?"

"Yes," replied Sanderson, "but it seems to make no difference, as I don't see, of course, why it should."

"Thank you very much," responded the tailor. "I may be pardoned for wanting to know her better under such circumstances."

As Gustavsen thenceforward began to pay her marked attentions, and as we lost no opportunity to put in his head an idea of the shoe factories and cotton mills she owned, Sanderson began to feel immediate relief from the company of the Smiths, the two sides of this peculiar courtship falling to work with a will. Both the mother and the daughter would from time to time endeavour to extract from the Baron some reference to his rank and estates, but would exaggerate these all the more from his replying that he knew little else of Germany than could be acquired in a trip there occasionally, since he left that country in his boyhood, for his reticence and modesty now became to them the convincing proof of deeply established consequence. Meanwhile Miss Smith began to revel in the importance everybody allowed her aboard. Rumour invested the Baron with vast estates and no one could take their eyes off these three.

"Thank the Lord," cried Sanderson, "I have escaped that infernal persecution at last!"

Then we would look with infinite relish on Gustavsen and Miss Smith, now inseparable. However, as the voyage began to draw to a close, some compunction arose within us and some feelings of responsibility.

"This fellow," said I, "is certainly going to marry

the girl unless we interfere. Now, one of us must let her know the facts before she leaves this ship."

To this Sanderson assented, adding that he thought we should do so even sooner. This being agreed, neither was willing to discharge the disagreeable duty; so, after much parley, it was left, in a merry mood, to lot, which decided the thing against me.

Taking what appeared proper occasion, I drew my chair close to Mrs. Smith's one evening in a corner of the great parlor.

"Mrs. Smith," I began, "there is a little matter that I think I ought to talk about with you. It relates to this—this Baron."

"Go on, Mr. Cameron," she replied; "I shall be glad to hear anything that concerns my daughter's future husband."

"What!" I exclaimed. "Has it gone so far as that?"

"That it has," she responded, "though I don't see why it should give you apparent dissatisfaction."

"Now, Mrs. Smith," I exclaimed bluntly, "I ask you ten million pardons—it is my own abominable work. This man's name is not Von Bomberg at all."

"That I understand," she replied.

"Then he has been perfectly frank?" I asked, much puzzled.

"Perfectly," answered she. "It is Baron von Halverstadt of Bavaria."

"Oh, pshaw, Mrs. Smith, it is too bad!" said I. "This is all a fraud. The man must be stopped. He is no more a baron than I am."

"Excuse me, Mr. Cameron," cried the lady, "if I prefer to manage this business myself. I flatter me I'm as quick a judge of titled people as some other per-

sons. I've not been making a fool of myself on board this ship, and I'll thank you to spread no stories that will make a fool of me, either."

With this she left me, showing that she was in no good humour, while, for my own part, I was a good deal mystified. What surprised me more was that, when I related this thing to Sanderson, the fellow, instead of laughing, showed himself annoyed.

"Hang it all," said he, "I don't see what the girl finds in that stupid beer-drinker to admire."

"Why, I suppose he's bright enough to a plain girl like her," I answered.

"She's not so bad-looking when you know her better," rejoined Sanderson, who, I could see, had undergone some changes of opinion; "and," he added, "she's an exceptionally accomplished young lady."

"But I thought she bored you, man?" I answered.

"Well, that is so, originally, I might say, when, in point of fact, I was not feeling well. The truth is, Miss Smith is really an attractive young lady, and I feel we ought to get her out of the scrape we have been putting her in."

As usual, it is the unexpected that happens. So it was a great surprise to discover, as I very speedily did, that this young woman had new charms for Sanderson since another man had caught her fancy. The humour of the thing was increased when I learned from a new acquaintance, whose home was in Massachusetts, that these Smiths were no paupers.

"Who told you such a thing?" he asked. "It seems to me more nonsensical gossip is spread aboard ship than anywhere else, except in lunatic asylums. That

Smith family has had money, and plenty of it, as long as I can remember."

This intelligence, you may be sure, I could not forbear imparting at once to Sanderson, who received it in even less good spirits than before. In fact, he became so disturbed as to draw from the man from Massachusetts further talk to verify the first. When I laughed at the tailor's coming luck, he grew angry with me, declaring I had handled the whole thing as badly as a boy, but that he would save the girl even though he had to give the tailor a whipping.

"Why the devil should you whip the tailor?" I exclaimed. "He's not to blame, is he, for playing the cards we put in his hands?"

"What right has any damned tailor to masquerade in this fashion?" he continued, ignoring my argument. "I don't think gentlemen like you and me should tolerate this sort of thing."

In this frame of mind, he continued to make advances to the young lady, who, however, plainly preferred the pretended foreigner, the result of it being that Sanderson at length lost his temper before her and fell to exposing the tailor.

"I don't believe a word of it," retorted Miss Smith, warmly, "and I should consider your talk impertinent if I had not honoured you with some encouragement, perhaps, the first day or two aboard, under the mistake of believing you to be a gentleman."

Just at this moment, as luck would have it, they were joined by the mother and her Baron, both of whom, perceiving something wrong, inquired the cause.

"This *gentleman* from Colorado or Alaska has been annoying me," cried Miss Smith.

"Mr. Sanderson," exclaimed the mother, "your jealousy towards my daughter has given us already annoyance enough."

"Jealousy?" retorted Sanderson, in deep vexation; "nonsense! I am sorry to see my friendly motives to your daughter slandered in that way."

"Baron von Halverstadt," said the daughter, ironically, "you might carry about with you a certificate of your birth to satisfy this person that you are not an impostor."

"Vat is this? Vat does this young man say about me?" inquired the German.

"What I say about you is that you are a tailor, and that when you first came aboard this ship you answered the inquiry of an acquaintance of mine by saying that you were in that business in San Francisco. That's what I said," replied Sanderson, determinedly.

"Dat is exactly vat I said," rejoined the German.

"You hear," sneered Sanderson.

"And there vas not a vord of truth in it. If you Americans would ask fewer questions, where you have no business, other people would not so often have to tell lies," continued the other.

"What kind of cool bluff is this?" exclaimed Sanderson, with contempt.

"A little slow now, if you please," replied the tailor. "I shall keep my tember mit you and then I do something we shall all regret. Now, Mr. Sanderson, I haf been in the West about mines and I happen to know a little more about you than you think. It is you, is it not? who has been pretending to more than belongs to you, I fancy. I think I know the firm you are connected with in Denver and that you are just one of their

little clerks, that is all. And now, sir, if you speak to either of these ladies or me again, I shall give you a good beading the first place ashore it is possible."

By this time Sanderson was in considerable heat, but shipboard is a miserable scene for a fight when one considers how summary is the behaviour of the Captain. Nor could I fail to notice that the German's words about Sanderson's condition of life, those little references to Denver and a clerkship, had caused him to wince a trifle; all of which observations making me put two and two together, as the saying is, I began to reflect that perhaps his purse was not in so agreeable a state as some one had given out. Then I recalled for the moment the fact that in a game of poker two nights before he had borrowed from me a hundred dollars, which he said he would hand me at London.

However, I was true to him, just the same.

"This tailor's impudence in carrying out this trick is the most astonishing thing I ever stumbled on in all my travels," I exclaimed, as one who had made many circumnavigations. "I'm going to get at the truth of this thing, once for all."

With this, setting out on a regular quest, I went from one officer of the ship to another until I reached the Captain, whom I had several times seen in conversation with the tailor.

"Oh," replied the Captain, "I've been tormented with questions about him the last two or three days. Some people have their reasons for keeping their affairs to themselves, but I'll say this, my boy, I don't think I'd care to wear a coat of that fellow's making, if you take him for a tailor."

From this, which was all I could get from the Cap-

tain, I saw we had missed our reckoning a few degrees about this German. I began to reflect upon what I had seen of him and cannot tell you now what a fine-looking man he began to appear.

During all these affairs I had occasionally talked with Mrs. Egerton, who was much amused. She had not, though, shown any desire to become acquainted with any of the persons concerned, and I felt she was of a social class somewhat above them all. She gave me a little advice, saying that she didn't like Sander-son's face, and appealing to that instinct which is supposed to exist in woman, a power undoubtedly possessed by them in some degree, and originating in the timidity that causes them from their earliest years to scrutinise the features of the more powerful sex.

The truth soon came out. The tailor was no tailor, but a German of sufficient rank to justify American affections. The Smiths in consequence became the cynosure of all eyes, the mother building castles not in Spain, but upon the Rhine. On the other hand, Sander-son had recourse to frequent drinking.

Mrs. Egerton remained aboard when, with Sander-son, I went ashore at Southampton. We were soon in London, where he speedily disappeared at the station, and I was laughing at myself the next day when I happened to stumble on him at the Carlton.

"Upon my word, I had given you up," he cried, pouring out a really plausible excuse for our becoming separated the day before. "Hang it, you know, I wanted to hand you that hundred dollars. Come, let us have lunch, and then we'll go down to the bank and I'll get a supply of cash. Damn it, I'm glad to see you."

Then we larded ourselves with a most expensive dinner, ordered by him with real taste, while we drank heartily and laughed over the mortifications of the voyage. Towards the close of the meal, while draining a glass of exquisite Château Yquem, he was spoken to by a page, who gave him a card.

"Fetch him here, boy," he said; and then—"but, no, I'll see him a moment alone. Just excuse me a minute, Cameron."

I waited, and I waited long. Then I paid to the uneasy waiter the reckoning for both. The clever scoundrel had tipped the boy to call him away in this fashion, so I added about twenty dollars to the hundred that had gone before.

CHAPTER XLIX

MY STAY IN LONDON

MY plans were to remain in London only a few days, because it was the chief thing in my mind to see Betty at once. Indeed, nothing but intense curiosity to see the capital of Christendom, rather than to pass by it, could have induced me to delay.

The very next morning whom should I fall in with on the Strand but Senator Baxom.

"For God's sake, boy!" cried he, "where the devil did you fall from?"

I explained how I came to be there, receiving from him in return the news that he and his wife had been on that side of the Atlantic about a month.

"I am delighted to know Mrs. Baxom is here," said I.

"Here!" he exclaimed. "Did you ever know her to be away from me? We're as sure to be together as two fat pigeons. Damn these American women who are always running to Europe alone! And, now that you're just soused in money, Cameron, I suppose you're playing the devil with the girls all round the world."

I looked as naughty as possible, but swore to my good behaviour.

"I wouldn't believe you on oath, you young rascal, about things of that sort. Now tell me about your plans."

We sauntered into the Cecil, where the Senator, while lamenting the heaviness of English drinks, listened to my intentions on the Riviera. He declared he had suspected there was something in the wind.

"Now, don't make a mistake, my boy," he said; "land your little trout while you've got her on the line. There's nothing like a good woman. I may have my faults, but I believe in pairing early and settling down to business."

While we were strolling about the great hotel and its veranda, we came, to my astonishment, upon Sanderson seated at a table with a brilliantly dressed woman whom I recognised as Maud Start. The fellow, after a second's embarrassment, sprang up to greet me with profuse explanations. This attempt to dupe me again put me beside myself with the thought that anybody could suppose me to be so great an ass. I thereupon interrupted him with such a hearty epithet as put him, in turn, in a rage, for, notwithstanding his contemptible character, he had that fine opinion of himself which we so often find in the same carcass with vice. In consequence he squared himself as if he would strike me; indeed, would, perhaps, have done so, if the Senator had not interfered.

"What do you mean by such cursed nonsense?" exclaimed the statesman.

"Well, I'll let it pass now," replied Sanderson, "but there'll be an explanation before long, young man."

To this I answered lightly, while the Senator added:

"Now, see here, my warm-blooded youth, you're in the wrong country for rows. They have a way over here of locking people up. No arguments with bad men from the West at all. They lock you up. And,

take my advice, don't draw a pistol or use it in this island, son. They'll put you in a stone cage for life or break your neck with a rope in sixty days' time. No weeping old maids, no flowers, you know. They'll hang you."

With this he led me off, fuming a bit himself about it all.

"That's a gay bird he had with him," he continued. "Do you know the pair?"

I explained to him my experience with both, including her probable relations with my uncle.

"I wonder she didn't make more out of the old fellow," the Senator observed.

That night I spent with the jolly Senator and his wife, who introduced me to some English and American friends, besides arranging a dinner party for me to take place the next day. This proved most enjoyable, as their guests were people of consequence. You can easily tell what estimate your host puts upon you by the persons he invites to meet you.

After two or three days in such good company I set out for France, amid the best wishes of the Baxoms, who insisted I should endeavour to take the same steamer home.

I may add that I had already seen enough of my countrymen's waste abroad to wonder how long our riches can stand the strain. As you walk through the magnificent commercial buildings in the United States, you may amuse yourself by saying: "The rent of this room for an entire month gives Ned his dinner to-night in Paris. This next room will buy Annie a box at the Opera. The floor below will furnish to Mary's duke his harlots and his hounds."

CHAPTER L

I GO TO PARIS

IN extremely elegant society it is natural for men, and it is their first inclination, to dislike each other, for it is a competition of affectations. When I arrived in Paris, the superior affectations of those I met through two or three letters of introduction fairly disgusted me with our species. Nor does the languor of European nobility sit well on the Americans who adopt it. However, I was not in any danger of the thing myself, as my stay was to be a short one. All I aimed at was to see something of that famous capital before going to the South. I felt sufficiently grand at the old *Continental*, where, having already gotten myself a body-servant, I endeavoured to look as stupid and indifferent as a German baron. This demeanour came to me by no means easily, since novelty would continually seduce me into animation.

One of the first persons I met through a letter was a young, wealthy and dissipated Pennsylvanian, who had already lived so long abroad as to feel some annoyance from his being American. He returned to our country no oftener than he could avoid, which was every second year in order to execute papers concerning his inheritance. This he was squandering on the joys of Paris, the chief of the many European sinks of American

plenty. Still, the creature was by no means insipid, for he had some spirit in his excesses, or, as we would say, got his money's worth out of his debauches. The equipages, the dinners, and the mistresses of Harry Dalton were the talk of the town.

With many pretty oaths, which I lost no time in practicing, he declared I was the making of an European gentleman. My being only an American gentleman was, he assured me, something I was really not to blame for and would doubtless do my best to outlive. The first thing he did was to introduce me at one of the clubs, that I might feel at home when he was out of town.

The next day, pursuant to an appointment, he took me with him to a country club, where, with a moderate knowledge of French, I contrived to do pretty well. There were present a number of Frenchwomen, of course, but as they were all of the respectable sort, as well as married, I was not without some diffidence in assuming that meaning style of glance and manner which continental matrons are accustomed to accept. In a little while Dalton, to encourage me, pointed out a Countess Mauvais, who, he declared, was so out of humour with her husband's *liaisons* as to be ripe for an affair herself. She was about thirty, of good figure, and above the need of cosmetics, besides which she had a Frenchwoman's manner of entangling whom she pleased. Nor was she by any means a fool, since she had been able, it was well known, to save her own estate almost entirely from her husband's wiles.

The women of France are in many ways so much stronger than the men that one cannot help wondering how the males have managed to retain the government

of that country. I had not long talked with the Countess in both French and English, the latter of which she spoke volubly, before I saw her shrewdness. Nevertheless, the skill of her flattery was such that, seeing no better game in sight, I replied in kind, with a success speedily rewarded by her cleverest efforts. The result of it all was that I engaged to visit her the next afternoon, when she was to receive a small company.

Coming at the appointed time, I found several persons already there of such a sort that it was plain my hostess aspired to something of a salon. Books, art, and music were not badly discussed, after which the talk took a turn towards sociology. This led to the favourite topic of national manners and the relative consequence of nations. The most intelligent talker, a Frenchman, said that, though he hated to admit it, the Germans were probably the foremost people in the world.

Nothing surprised me more in all their talk than that to none of them did it occur that my own country had any claims whatever to the first place among nations. England, France, and Germany were all discussed, but when I boldly suggested the United States they seemed much surprised. Indeed, it was clear they could never consider our pretensions at all. For my part, never having been permitted to doubt from infancy that my own was the greatest country, and in every respect the greatest, upon earth, I was infinitely shocked, for among no people is the vanity or conceit of race and government so overwhelming as among ourselves.

Surely there is a fair way of comparing the eminence of nations. For what are governments formed? First, to secure one man from the violence of another, that

is, to enforce the laws for the suppression of crime. In this a man must be half mad to contend we have any claims to precedence, since it is well known we have more violent crimes in proportion to our population than any highly civilised people under the sun. Second, it is a primary object of society to protect the property rights of citizens. No American can pretend that civil justice is better administered here than in Europe. Third, it is an object of government to conduct affairs without corruption. In our own country the notoriety of bribery and fraud in our city governments and in our State Legislatures, as everybody knows, is not tolerated elsewhere save in China. Fourth, efficacy or expedition is required in the machinery of government. In this the principal European administrations entirely surpass us, whether it be in building a battleship, in moving an army, or in keeping the streets of cities clean, their pavements in repair, or their buildings constructed to prevent the spread of fire. Fifth, passing from government to society, we are inferior to the principal European countries in scholarship and not superior to them in the diffusion of common education. Sixth, in art and music we are decidedly inferior to them. Seventh, in domestic morals we are not purer. Eighth, it is only in the accumulation of fortunes than we have any right to boast; but when we consider the mines, the forests and the fertile plains bestowed upon us, we may reflect, too, upon what might have been done with these by Germany, which, on so old a soil, has reared her mighty industries and scattered her fabrics over all the earth.

"In our country," I remarked, "we cannot help thinking that the country in which money is accumulated

most rapidly is the greatest of all, but, on reflection, I suppose we ought to have something else to boast of after a century or more. However, we are certainly a very free people."

"The Germans," he replied, "are steadily achieving freedom by the safe degrees in which the English achieved it."

He was too polite to say more, and it occurred to me as doubtful whether we are freer in America than they are in either France or England. Meanwhile, the conversation turned from compliment on German success to contempt for German manners, all being of one voice that these people are the most disagreeable in Europe.

"Whenever I hear of an American girl's marrying a German I pity her," exclaimed the Countess.

"Well you may," added another, "for, while our Frenchmen often neglect their wives, they give them at least superficial politeness, which is a good deal. The Germans—oh, they are coarse tyrants at home."

"I understand," observed the Countess, "that there is one of them after little Miss Sinclair's fortune, that pretty little chick."

"What Miss Sinclair is that?" I asked, with some concern.

"A Miss—what do you call it?—Betty Sinclair; she was here last week."

I could not refrain from mentioning my knowing her very well, besides showing some interest in her, upon which the Countess assured me I need have no fear of the German, as a young American named Catesby was paying the girl decided and apparently successful attentions.

When I quitted the house it was with an appointment to visit my hostess' château in a small party the next day, but with a secret intention of leaving Paris at once for whatever part of the country Betty was now in, as to which they could only answer that the family were on a tour through the château country. Among those who left the house with me was a Pennsylvanian, a few years older than myself, who, in spite of poor health, had had considerable success as a composer.

"I have not the income," he remarked frankly, "to spend much of my time with this class of people, and I hardly imagine I should enjoy them much if I did. However, I'll say this much for them, that they are no worse than a loud set we have in every American city nowadays, while they have at least a respect for men of intellect."

"Yes," I replied, "our parvenus at home care for none except others that have money to spend."

"It is probably because they feel insecure in their social positions, but maybe it is because, after having given up their whole souls to getting rich, they can't see what else there is in the world worth having. Anyhow, there is a difference. Now, in Austria, the nobility will entertain penniless wits, authors, and musicians by the score, when a mere money-maker would have no chance at all. By the way, you appeared to know Miss Sinclair."

Affecting as much indifference as possible, I answered that I should be glad to know where I could do her the courtesy of a short call.

"She may come back to town," responded he. "They all spend a month or more here after returning from

the seashore or the mountains. A little while later they will fly off to the South. Now I think of it, though," he added, "you can learn more from Dalton. He knows her. He's on friendly terms with that fellow Catesby, who follows her everywhere—that is, when he's sober enough to know where he's going."

We dined at a luxurious restaurant, where he pointed out the celebrities of fashion, a beau who had lost a fortune at Monte Carlo, an American girl who was on the eve of divorce from a spendthrift Italian count, a pretty little Frenchman whose creditors gave him no peace, and several bejewelled dames who were glad their husbands kept themselves busy with mistresses. I was in hopes some one would turn up who could be asked concerning Betty, but this good luck was not afforded me, so I had to give up all hopes of finding her that night, as Dalton was not to be seen.

CHAPTER LI

MEETING AT THE CHÂTEAU

WHEN morning came I hurried to Dalton's apartments, with the good fortune of finding him abed. To my surprise, he advised me he was going to the Countess' country place on the eleven o'clock train, an hour earlier than the rest of the party, of which I did not know until then he was even to be a member.

"The Countess and I are good friends, my dear fellow," said he, "and, in fact, I might as well take you into my confidence. I'll be damned if I like to play tricks on my friends, whatever I do. The fact is, I introduced you to her to help myself. You see, the woman has taken a fancy to me, and that cursed fool of a husband, though he's in a notorious affair himself right under her eyes, is as jealous of her as the devil. Now, for God's sake, do us a good turn here and let her act as if it was you she had taken a fancy to—this for a little while, you know, so as to draw him off me for a breathing spell."

At this I laughed, consenting only for the short stay I was to make in Paris.

"Thanks, old fellow," he replied feelingly; "I knew you would do me a gentleman's turn in this way. Besides, it will do you good to be talked about. A fellow amounts to nothing here unless some married woman is known to be after him."

I lost no time in asking about Betty.

"Oh, that little girl! You know her? Yes, she's in town. I'll get you her address as soon as we come back to-morrow. A drunken sneak named Catesby is after her. He owes everybody in town, but his family connections are first class, so, of course, he can keep the thing up until he makes a good marriage."

"What do you say to my seeing a little of Miss Sinclair myself?" I inquired.

"A happy idea, old chap," he replied; "first class, if it annoys that cursed Catesby. I understand he's been talking to the Count about me, and I'll cane him if he keeps it up."

Though I would rather have remained in town in quest of Betty, I saw I might as well, for that day, go to the Countess', which I did at twelve o'clock. By two, after a ride through the pretty country south of Paris, I arrived with several others, to whom I was introduced at the country station, and with whom I was driven to the château.

The place was no Chenonceaux, but it was ample for comfortable entertainment. The party were about ten, to which was added the Count and, to make things entirely pleasant, his well-born "friend." The fellow, like a greedy dog that wishes to keep two bones to himself, immediately began to watch his wife while diverting himself with his mistress. That it was Dalton he had in mind was plain, but his good spouse, quite equal to the occasion, speedily applied to me such attentions as at least divided his vigilance.

"Keep this up, for the Lord's sake," whispered Dalton; "we'll help you play the hand. What I want is to make him feel easy about returning to town. I want

to stay here a day or two with one or two others after you return to-morrow."

Accordingly, during all the evening Dalton affected the air of one chagrined and thoroughly out of humour, the Countess showed me repeated favours, and the Count apparently settled into the comfortable belief that his wife, jealous of him, was simply flitting from one passing fancy to another in order to provoke him. She was also discreetly cold towards his friend, so the party became a really happy one.

It was about ten o'clock when, passing across the main hall or corridor of the house, I stood in astonishment before Betty Sinclair! We looked at each other bewildered, she not having known until this minute that I was even in Europe. With infinite surprise, and then with emotion, she sank against the wall. Indeed, she would perhaps have fallen to the floor had I not rushed to support her, while I noticed for the first time by whom she was attended—her mother and Catesby. They were all in travelling garb.

The poor girl passed her hand repeatedly across her eyes as I supported her with my arm, for the others, as much astonished as either of us at an apparition like me, had not the quickness to aid her.

"Betty," I whispered, "don't you know me? Speak, Betty. Please don't faint, dear."

By this time others had come to the spot, among them the Countess, whose lively accents restored composure.

"Ah, how charming that you should have come! Our little company has not been complete until now."

"My dear Countess," replied Mrs. Sinclair, "it is entirely due to an accident. Our motor-car is injured.

We were sure you could shelter us a little while until we can reach the village."

Explanations, exclamations, protests, devotion, enchantment, and the like followed between the ladies, saving only Betty, who scarcely murmured a word beyond the merest syllables of politeness. Again and again would her eyes rest upon me, then turn aside as if to conceal her happiness. I could see, even in my excitement, that she was slightly changed, but I did not fail to observe that the pretty girl had become a beautiful woman, while in the woman there remained the round, bright eyes of the simple and credulous girl.

The Countess, undismayed by these reinforcements, which, in point of fact, were rather to her taste, as she loved diversion, now made the new guests at home, insisting they should not attempt to reach the village that night and suffer the anguish of an inn. Mrs. Sinclair capitulated somewhat slowly to hospitality, for I could see that, notwithstanding the general gaiety, she had her eyes upon her daughter and myself. Thus far none of us had had a chance to talk apart. I was in a ferment to say a word with Betty, who was almost constantly attended by either Catesby or the mother when no one else was at her side, while the rapid approach of bedtime added to my uneasiness.

On the other hand, the curiosity of both Catesby and the mother as to how I had turned up in such a place was naturally not concealed.

"Delighted to see you again, I'm sure," he observed, coming up to where I obstinately remained near Betty. "I think you were last in journalism, was it not? You are here representing the press, perhaps?"

"I am in no business at all, at present," I replied,

fairly dying to let him know what a fat purse I had, but not caring to seem in a hurry to do so.

"Ah, really," answered he. "Will be delighted to render you any service you need in some new line or other."

"Thank you very much," I replied, cursing him under my breath.

"Are you returning soon to the States?" asked the mother, in an exceedingly puzzled mind.

"I am in no hurry, Mrs. Sinclair," I answered lazily; and then, seeing my chance as a servant was passing: "Boy, you may tell my man, Achille, that he need not wait until my bedtime, as I shall be very late to-night."

The effect of this remark being just what I wanted upon the mother and Catesby, was by no means displeasing to Betty, naturally elated at any circumstance that compelled her mother to respect me. At this juncture we were joined by Dalton, who, having established an agreeable relation with the Count and enjoyed several glasses of wine, was inclined to lend me a hand.

"Upon my word, Mrs. Sinclair," said he, "you're talking to one of our new lions here. A man with Mr. Cameron's fortune and good looks is going to reinforce our little set this winter."

"Charmed to hear it," replied the lady, "but I'm not surprised a particle, as Mr. Cameron was one of our best friends in New York."

Relieved both by the news and her own lie, the good dame gave me a trifling rest, Catesby being led off by Dalton. It was my first chance to be alone with the dear girl, whose face, now that I saw it again, inspired my heart with unutterable tenderness.

"Betty," I cried in a rapid whisper, "I am rich now.

My uncle's fortune has come to me. Have you never heard of it?"

"Oh, what good news," she answered. "No, I have heard nothing of it. Think of it! You are rich."

"Rich enough to take you back with me, Betty," I replied. "Do you hear me, Betty?—to take you back."

"Oh, don't—not here—please don't, Mr. Cameron," she answered, shrinking towards a window.

"Don't *Mr.* me, Betty," I exclaimed. "You know you love me and you know I love you and——"

"I beg pardon, Miss Sinclair," said the infernal Catesby, breaking in upon us, "your mother would like to see you a moment."

Though I gave the fellow a black look, I could only surrender Betty, who, in confusion with her tell-tale blushes, felt obliged to go with him at once, unable even to raise her eyes to mine.

The rest of the night I passed in no contented frame of mind, for I felt that Betty had still some opinions unfavourable to my part on the veranda that night with Trixy, as to all of which I had never had a chance to offer explanation. What made me more uncomfortable was that this explanation must make me a liar to Trixy at least in the judgment of a pure-minded girl.

The entire company were soon in their rooms for the night, and when I saw Betty in the morning she was ready, with her mother and Catesby, to proceed on their way; nor was I able again to speak with her alone. I learned, to my vexation, that they were on their way to Dijon. They would not return to Paris, but, as the cool weather was now advancing, make their way gradually to their winter home near Mentone. From Betty I received a warm pressure of the hand at parting,

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together with a look which, though it did not fill me with confidence, assured me I still possessed her affections. On the other hand, the mother extended me no invitation. She was delighted to have seen me again! No doubt we should have the good luck to fall in with each other soon! At all events we should meet some time in New York!

When they left the château I returned to the company in a mood too full of disappointment for concealment. The brisk Countess, at last perceiving it, exclaimed:

"So! It is more serious than we had imagined. But who can blame you?"

I tried to resume my affectation of gallantry toward her of the day before, but she broke into a merry laugh.

"No, Mr. Cameron, no. My Lord! It is not necessary. We understand each other. Thank you, dear sir. I am enchanted with your good-nature. Henceforth I am your friend. You may count upon me in this business, dear Mr. Cameron."

By this time Dalton, having joined us, drew me to another room on some excuse or other.

"Cameron," said he, "that damned Catesby will tell some lie or other to the mother or the girl against you. When I happened to have a word with the sneak last night, he referred to your presence here immediately, and soon made an opportunity to remark that this fortune of yours was all a myth; that it was part of your game to get little Sinclair."

"The dirty scoundrel!" I cried, with a hearty curse besides.

"Oh, don't lose your temper about it," answered Dalton. "I want to see you get the best of him, but,

after all, I suppose you're not fool enough to be in love, and you've got all the money you need already, so there's no reason to be crazy about marriage. I'd as soon be dead myself as tied by law to any woman on earth. However, you must get the best of that whelp. He owes me five thousand francs, the puppy, and I imagine he's going to owe it the rest of his life."

CHAPTER LII

ANOTHER MEETING

ENJOYING the pretty scenes on my way back to Paris, I resolved to make my journey thence to Mentone in an automobile, that species of machine being about this time first in vogue for tours. Before I quitted the château, as Catesby had not accompanied the Sinclairs farther, I asked Dalton if he had happened to learn whether he was to join them in the Riviera.

"I asked him a little while ago," he replied, "and he said he was, but, you know, the fellow is such a liar I don't rely on what he says at all."

Having myself some talk with Catesby, though with secret desire to thrash him, I casually remarked that I learned from Dalton his having an intention to go to the South.

"Really!" he replied languidly. "I should imagine you would know by this time that that person is such a liar no one in his senses would pay any attention to him."

The happy understanding which these gentlemen had of each other was not lost upon me by any means, but was naturally unsatisfactory to one seeking information. I was charitable enough, though in no good humour, to impute this aspersion to that condition of

mind in which people of fashion find themselves during the morning hours, since well-bred people invariably dislike each other at breakfast and shun each other until noon.

By the latter hour the Count, Catesby and I returned to the metropolis, where we separated at once. Dalton remained with several others at the château, but it was understood that the party should return a day or two later. For my part, I proceeded immediately to prepare at great expense for a fine trip to Mentone. New suits of clothes were ordered with all dispatch, at least a dozen of them, a diamond ring and pin for Betty, which cost me ten thousand francs, and the finest automobile to be had. In fact, the last sou of my credit was put to the strain at my banker's. Then I arranged a handsome dinner by way of farewell to Dalton and my recently added friends.

That day I happened, in passing a steamship office in the Rue Scribe, to see within the familiar figures of Sanderson and Maud Start, for the highway around the world is well beaten now and travellers continually fall in with each other. In a moment Sanderson came out hurriedly, leaving her awaiting the attention of the clerk in a small crowd, so I deemed it worth my while to enter.

"Yes, we want the next boat to New York," she said to the clerk. "Montgomery is the name—John Montgomery and wife."

Some talk ensuing between them, a selection of a room was made at last, and as she turned to look for Sanderson, she saw me.

"How do you do, Maud?" said I.

After a look of some annoyance, she replied :

"On your way home, I suppose?"

"No, going South," I answered. "And you?"

"Just trying to find whether some friends are going home on this next steamer. I'm taking the train for Brussels myself."

Knowing that she was lying, I wondered whether she had exhausted already three thousand dollars which, in Albany, it had been generally understood my uncle had given her for the sake of peace not long before he died, or whether she and Sanderson were returning on mischief to me, the truth being I never could feel quite at ease, considering how natural it was that my uncle should have left a will. Her looks showed, too, that she was desirous to be rid of me.

"Fine day, Maud," I said. "Your style of beauty will play havoc over here."

"Oh, you're very kind," she retorted, "to be so funny, but I'll have you understand I'm not to be made game of, though I'm not so beautiful to see as some play-actresses that needn't be mentioned that prides themselves on their shape and is bent on catching rich young men that fancy they're come into a fortune, such persons, all of them, being beneath my notice."

CHAPTER LIII

'A' NAUGHTY DINNER

THOUGH he was by no means so elegant as my other Parisian acquaintances, I took pleasure in seeing my Pennsylvanian, the composer, who lived on the other side of the river among others more bohemian than himself. I invited him to my dinner, telling him that it was, for the present, in the nature of farewell. Accepting the invitation, he spoke to me frankly of my new friends at the château, for he saw that I had considerable curiosity where my means of impartial information were as yet so small.

"The little Count," he said, "is ruinously in debt. In fact, it is generally suspected here that Dalton lends him a great deal of money. You understand, of course. The wife is pretty gay, but she contrives to keep herself apparently above wholesale criticism."

With that he ran to his table to set down some strain that had flashed through his wits, making at the same time such nods of the head and thrumming of his fingers as would have made me think him mad if I had not known him to be a musician. Meanwhile we were joined by a German student who, I learned, was about to dedicate his life to a series of works on the antennæ of the Philippine ant, a subject on which he deemed mankind woefully dark. As he had all the disputatious-

ness of that people, I soon left the pair, though much interested to learn the relations between Dalton and the Mauvais.

This dinner of mine I had consigned to a distinguished caterer, who, receiving my order at first with the lofty indifference of an artist patronised only by nobility, put me so far on my mettle that I haughtily gave him *carte blanche*. Upon that the fellow set to work with a will. Nothing that the confines of the earth could afford seemed to have escaped his notice—fish, flesh or fruit. However, I cared nothing about that, for I had determined to leave my mark on the world of fashion.

My guests, about ten in number, were visibly pleased at so much splendour, and, as they were persons I had met in the gaudy circle of Dalton, they were far from novices in extravagance. One old English beau, who had rotted a generation in Paris, declared he had seen nothing since the joyous days of Napoleon and Eugénie.

"Those were devilish days, Mr. Cameron," he sighed.

"Think how you have outlived all that," remarked the Countess; "think of the temptations you have escaped!"

"Escaped!" ejaculated the old sinner. "Why, my God! madam, if I ever let a temptation escape me in my life I'd die of shame."

This pleasantry being much appreciated, we gave ourselves up to our liquors, quoting freely from the various Anacreons whom we could recall as bards of love and wine, nor did the conversation lack that salt which is so commonly found in gay repasts. As Sir

Robert Walpole long ago observed, it is best to talk bawdy at the table, since everybody is sure to understand that.

This flavour in the talk being most acceptable to our old beau, he produced a sonnet, which he said he had prepared in honour of his host. Of course, it was an intolerable thing both in metre and rhythm, nor could any one make out just what he was driving at, but on this account it was vigorously applauded, the sonnet being a form of verse in which you can say nothing and nobody know it.

Things, in short, were going very prettily, when I observed an increasing friction between the Countess and a beautiful comedienne, who was attracting unusual attention from Dalton. The latter dame, employing the vivacious arts of the stage, was perhaps not insensible to the advantages of adding to her list so extravagant a swain, but the Countess, to hide her annoyance, began to lavish her smiles upon me in so unusual a degree that the Count, in turn, became obviously fretful at his lady's indiscretion. This, it may be added, was, from what I had heard about his debts, no less than justice on his part, considering that Dalton, having paid for her favours, was entitled to keep them to himself, even though he might not always call, as business men say, for their delivery.

American fortunes were discussed. "I agree with our transatlantic friends," cried the actress, with an air of melancholy. "Riches are the true object of existence. All the wealth one can get in this world is none too much for the misery of having to live in it."

"For my part," added the old Englishman, "I've

tried all my life to get out of this scene of dissipation and false gaiety. I prefer what the Germans call the simple life—the farm, the beautiful estate, my hounds and stables.”

This sentiment was vigorously applauded, for there is nothing so exquisite as that simple life which they can enjoy who are rich enough to afford it.

“Upon my soul,” cried Dalton to the actress, “I should hate to see such beauty as yours buried in a wilderness.”

“Better there than to endure the disappointments that await women of my profession, the longing for home and offspring,” replied she, who at heart would have considered nothing more terrible than either household or a child.

“I trust the queen of the drama has no affairs of the heart to make her long for retirement,” remarked the Countess.

“I should be lucky indeed if I wholly escaped them,” replied the other.

“Oh, ho! Madam is in love,” cackled the Englishman. “Her feelings have been hurt by some one or other.”

“We never love deeply those who never give us pain,” she responded, with a glance at Dalton, who replied in kind.

This sort of talk, stimulated with wine, among people by no means too good to begin with, grew to a degree excessively lively, and, the Countess encouraging me, I showed her attentions that approached endearment. The Count, I failed to perceive, was becoming furious, for he happened to have no partner with whom

to conceal his disgust. Accordingly, the meal was no sooner ended and my guests scattered through the apartments than he led me aside and began to vent his feelings in tones of suppressed rage.

CHAPTER LIV

A BAD ENDING

NOBODY could have been more astounded than I at the angry manner of the Count, who, I had conceived, could not for a moment see anything serious between me and his wife, and to this effect I hastened to express myself. But what is the use of one man in liquor making explanations to another in the same condition? The more I tried to set the matter right, the more I made it wrong. When a man has been prematurely jealous, you make a fool of him if you show him he never had any ground, so you cannot make light of the thing to begin with, while, on the other hand, if you treat it very seriously, he may well wonder why you make so much of it.

Things reaching a heated pass, the lady herself happened to join us from another room on the arm of Dalton, for the whole party was about to bid me good-night.

"For God's sake!" cried the dame, in a volley of French, "what is the matter between you?"

"You will retire, madam," replied her lord. "Monsieur Cameron and myself are having some explanations."

"No, no," she exclaimed. "Here is trouble, Mr. Dalton. We shall have scandal."

"Then I am sure you will be satisfied, madam," retorted the Count, in a still greater heat of maudlin anger. "You have done your best to cause it. Leave us, I command you."

The Countess, though, being herself muddled with wine, was by no means obedient, and retorting on him with considerable temper, received from him a sarcasm based upon the flippancy of her morals which could so easily throw off an apparent attachment for Dalton. Enraged at the base suggestion that a charming wife like herself could be false to her lover, his spouse, like any fishmonger's wife, and in violation of the rules of good society, which require an injured wife to hate her husband in silence, delivered him a hearty slap in the face. This, as may be imagined, put the whole room, now filled with the other guests, in commotion, for, every one being somewhat intoxicated, there was a babel of voices, expostulations and arguments, during which the Count and Dalton would have come to blows but for the interference of the head waiter in his apprehensions for the good name of the house. Now, this fellow's laying hands on a gentleman put the old Englishman beside himself with passion, his mind being too befuddled to see the wisdom of the servant; so, after the simple manner of English debate, he felled the poor devil with a chair. Thereupon two of the servants came to the rescue and the affair became a disgraceful brawl.

In the midst of this the proprietor, followed by one or two others, rushed in with unheard-of French oaths, drove us into separate rooms I know not how, and restored order instead of driving us out of doors, where the decency of his café would have been lost. I then

lost no time in going from guest to guest lamenting, for I was now sober enough, the unhappy turn my entertainment had taken. None of them, though, had any patience with me. What the devil had I meant by inviting them to such an affair? Had I drugged people who had trusted me? The little Pennsylvanian, who had been at the outset the most flattered to be of the company, was the most incensed.

"This thing will get into the papers and my wife will hear the devil's own exaggeration of it, Mr. Cameron," said he. "I really don't think you have known me long enough to invite me to your dinners."

I felt like strangling the ungrateful creature. Dalton also was angry with me. He swore this was what he deserved for taking me up. The only one who resumed his reason was the Englishman.

"By God!" said he, "this lark reminds me of old times. Come and see me to-morrow, my boy, at eleven."

The next day I had to face a scandalous bill from the boniface. The rascal knew he had the advantage of me, so he set to plundering me villainously. In my despair I went to my old beau, whom I found taking, as he termed it, just a bit of a breakfast—some fish, kidneys, muffins, potatoes, marmalade and tea. Laughing heartily over the frolic of last night, he bade me worry no more about the bill, as he would take the matter in charge himself and settle it at half. Accordingly, I gave him a check for what he declared was enough. I felt he was the only man in the party.

But my ill luck was not ended. The affair, written in that persiflage and irony in which the French excel the rest of mankind, was in all the evening prints, the

most disreputable orgy, if one-half they said could be believed, that had yet disgraced the town. Dalton, whose name I now found was a common one in public dissipations, was declared to be quite outdone by his new pupil, who had added fisticuffs in dining out.

This bad business I saw was all the worse from the fact that Catesby had only to send to Betty the newspapers of that day to do me more injury than his own tongue could achieve in a month, a mischief the easier to accomplish as the last impressions she had of me in America, being those of that night on the veranda, could not be wholly favourable. To get out of town, to hurry to Mentone without delay, was now imperative. Accordingly, I resolved to start the very next morning in my motor-car with all the luggage it could carry and guided by an experienced man.

Reflecting on Walpole's pleasantries about table-talk, I regretted my not having employed so harmless an amusement instead of making pretended love to another man's wife, a pastime that, in modern society, is liable to be misunderstood by reason of the nervous natures of the dames of to-day, whose very husbands cannot always feel certain of the number of their lovers. On the Countess I reflected with considerable disappointment, she had appeared so sweet and clean; nor could I help remembering what I had heard concerning one of the finest ladies imaginable, that she had only one little fault—she would swear every time she got drunk.

CHAPTER LV

COL. EVANSON AND LILLIAN

BEFORE quitting Paris I had the good luck to meet Colonel Evanson, who informed me that he had accompanied Lillian on a sudden voyage; that she would return in a fortnight, sufficiently rested to appear in her new play, and that he himself would spend a month longer. She had just arrived from London.

"All I wish, suh," added he, "is to protect Miss Lily from these foreign whelps with their lecherous faces. Why, suh, they make one's flesh creep so, a gentleman can feel one coming before he sees him."

He railed at the French cookery. "Of course, suh, it's not bad, but just give me a dish of fried chicken and a sweet potato in old Southern style without any frills around it."

We sauntered into a drinking-place, where he was ill content that he could get neither good whiskey nor a mint-julep, some Englishmen, whom I had met elsewhere, joining me with some amusement at the manners of the Colonel. The talk ran on our Civil War, in which the Colonel admitted, with a smile, his heavy losses in a ravaged estate.

"Curse me," exclaimed one of the young Englishmen most foolishly, "if I don't wish the war had gone the other way——"

"I beg your pardon, suh," replied the Colonel, "there's too common a misapprehension here about that sort of sentiment pleasing men in my position. Let me say one thing, suh, every white man in the South is a citizen of the American Union."

The Colonel and I now made our way to his hotel, where we found Lillian in the midst of dressmakers and milliners, some exhibiting hats, others spreading upon couches or chairs the delicate fabrics of Venice and Lyons, all in a chatter that even our entrance did not immediately interrupt.

"Oh, how charming!" she exclaimed when she saw me.

"Yes, Lily, I certainly did find him, like you told me to do," observed the father.

She gave him a pretty look of disapproval, to which, when she saw that I had noticed it, she added a slight blush.

"You're so conceited already, Charles, I don't wish you to imagine everybody in the world is running after you, you rascal."

Some pleasant banter following, she informed me she had suddenly resolved on selecting in Paris her costumes for the new play, but that, as she had little time to spare, she would have to return in a few days to London, where some manager or other wished to discuss a "season" in England. During this talk the Colonel went out to find a good cigar and Lillian banished the tradespeople, whose wares, however, she bade them leave behind to be examined at her leisure.

"Now, old Mr. Vanity," she said as she seated herself near me in a very happy humour, "I shall have only three little days here, but if you'll promise to be

very, very good I'll give them all—that is to say, most of them to you."

"It's too bad," I began in a hang-dog manner. "I'm just on the point of going——"

"Nowhere," she cried in the confident authority of successful beauty, while tapping the floor with the tip of her slipper, "only here, sir."

In a moment, though, her quick eye discerning in me some new state of mind, she added:

"Where in the world are you going, man?"—this a trifle petulantly, for it was probably the first time in her life she had ever known a man not to linger at her skirts, and as I began some unsatisfactory reply, she exclaimed:

"Oh—I see—ah, yes—a young lady!"

Instinctively she glanced at her image in a mirror on the opposite wall, almost shaking her plumes, like the angel in the poem, until heavenly fragrance filled the space around.

"I declare!" she said in sweet displeasure half concealed. "Men are so odd!"

"But it really amounts to nothing, only a friendly acquaintance formed in New York," I remarked.

"Well, who cares what it amounts to, Master Charles? Who cares?"—saying which she daintily poked each of my cheeks with her forefinger in pretended unconcern. However, I saw she was annoyed. Was it possible Lillian had conceived a sentimental feeling for me? I again hastened to explain.

"Really, you know, there's nothing serious in my relations——"

"But who cares if there is? I say," she answered

briskly. "Why do you make such a fuss about it? You think the whole town is crazy about you?"

"Why, you see, Lillian, you seemed to think——"

"No, I don't. Come, let's talk about something else. No, you mustn't touch me. Why do you persist in misunderstanding me so? I declare, you're more conceited than ever. Let's talk about something else, not but I suppose she's pretty as a doll and has flattered your vanity by making love to you. Here, look at this brocaded silk! Now, stop trying to touch me, Charles. I suppose you imagine everybody's in love with you."

"Oh, hang the silk!" I cried gaily. "The finest thing in the room is you, and all I have to say is that I remain in Paris subject to your orders and——"

"Now, Charles——"

"There never was a moment when Lillian Evanson couldn't command me first, last and all the time," I continued in jolly gallantry; "so here go gloves, hat, cane, top-coat——"

I was flinging them on a couch with a laugh, when, in an impulse of generosity, she caught my two hands in hers.

"You big-hearted fellow. No, Charles, no. I've been selfish. I'll not——"

"But here I stay, fair goddess, until——"

"No, no. I've been selfish, I say. I mustn't monopolise you. You see, it's this way. Let us sit down a minute. To be honest, just after you sailed it dawned on me for the first time how sincere a friend you'd been. The other men—well, I'm afraid their intentions are not—though, of course, I'm to blame myself, too. I'm been a trifle reckless, I suppose. It's so hard to know just where to stop."

We were silent a moment until I said:

"Lillian, I swear you're growing a trifle serious lately."

"Yes," she replied. "I'm afraid—no, not afraid, to be sure, but I reckon—I mean I think—I am. This young lady of yours, she's not—not—an actress, I suppose?"

"No," said I. "Her name is Betty Sinclair."

"A pretty name," answered Lillian. Then she sighed faintly as she added: "I'm sure you're not to be blamed for liking those pretty, innocent chicks compared with such blasé——"

"Blasé! You mean yourself?" I exclaimed with a laugh, in which I forced her to join, rallying her out of her dullness until, becoming herself again, she fitted one hat after another on her yellow locks or posed to drape the marvel of a Flemish loom. All the while she was describing the situations in her new play, quoting several smart retorts, and in particular practising an ingenious limp that a certain scene permitted.

Captivating deity, she came back again to earth, though, and soon betrayed her new inclination to be grave, a turn the deeper as I chanced to mention the name of my uncle.

"Oh, don't let us talk about him or wills," she exclaimed, with an unhappy look, and when at last I rose to say good-bye, she said:

"No, no kissing again. I'm afraid you think Lillian a pretty careless sort of girl. Well, one can't undo some things in the past, but one can stop, can stop."

Never could I, never should I have let her escape one more honest, friendly little hug, had not at this moment her father returned.

"I declare, Lily," he remarked as he entered, "these flunkies over here contrive to find more excuses for a tip than——"

"Oh, father, dear," replied Lillian, "let the poor creatures have it! We'll never miss it."

"Oh, I reckon not, child," replied the old man. "But, Lord bless your heart, honey, just look at all this finery to be paid for. What's it all going to cost, child?"

"Cost! Why, father, dear, I haven't time to find what a thing is going to cost. I have to have what I want, that's all I know."

CHAPTER LVI

MENTONE

IT is nearly one voice among travellers that France is the most pleasing country in the world, since it combines the attractions of ancient and modern history, of languorous repose and intelligent thrift, of art and science, of agriculture and manufacture. Here the climates of North and South are happily blended and tempered. The face of nature is glad; the people frugal and pleasant. Every historic charm abounds. The land that produced stupendous Napoleon beheld the transcendent enterprise of Hannibal, and we may turn from the galleries of Versailles to reflect upon those memories of church and state that sleep in Avignon.

I am ashamed to say I went through many delightful scenes in a hurry. What I wished was to see Betty as soon as possible. Indeed, I would have taken no chances in a motor-car if I had not known that it would do me little good to reach the Riviera more speedily by train, since Betty's family were not to be there quite so soon.

I did have occasion to observe that pretty France is not suffering for that want of propagation of our species that has given so many concern. These things commonly regulate themselves according to the just needs of population, and, where fewer children are begotten than might appear natural, it will generally be

discovered that either the offspring or the parents would have fared worse if more had been born. Nor have I ever been able to see on what religious or moral grounds the living should be reproached if they do not give life to others who, never having had existence, have never demanded it, especially when full half of those who receive it pronounce it an empty thing, after the most favourable trial. The defence of nations, whilst nations maintain the right of conquest, may require the multiplication of offspring, in which event it may be encouraged on the score of patriotism, but for any other reason it would appear more unjust that a woman should bear many than that she should not bear at all. Who can deny that each individual child is an additional care; that it increases poverty if poverty exist before; that it often creates poverty where there was none to begin with; that a few offspring will commonly receive better rearing than many; and that both poverty and crime are usually found where brats are thickest?

After several mishaps, a day or two late, at least, I reached Mentone. Without delay I hurried to the home of Mrs. Egerton, whom I resolved to make my adviser in a campaign in which I could have no other base so good. She lived, I found, in a rather large house, commanding a pretty view of the sea. Gardens and arbours pleased the eye even in this late season.

"You are very welcome, Mr. Cameron," she exclaimed as she greeted me, "and you must give me a part of every day, as it is so short a drive from your hotel. I live simply, you see."

"Not so simply, to my mind, Mrs. Egerton," I replied, "unless you mean by comparison with some very

grand way of living you have maintained somewhere else."

She had, she replied, only five or six servants, two or three horses, and some inexpensive furniture, enough, in short, for small hospitality or casual entertainment, so she complimented herself on having that sort of disposition which is easily contented. There lived with her a dyspeptic old brother, who was not feeling well just then because, two or three days before, he had chewed a piece of meat only thirty times instead of thirty-two. However, he was pleasant enough, for, on my mentioning the tideless nature of the Mediterranean and the mystery of Longinus' knowing in his situation that there were other seas not tideless, he showed himself acquainted with the old authors and became complimentary.

"You are the only young American I have met the past ten years that seems to care for anything except cigarettes and tennis. Damme, in my day youngsters used to think of literature. The only literature they seem to want now is dirty French novels."

The old fellow had been paying the consequences of a somewhat dissipated youth by suffering innumerable disorders of the stomach, to relieve which he had travelled in many parts of the earth, had cursed various climates, had sweated in all the famous baths. One might have expected him to grow bitter in his ill luck, but fortunately his mind took an ironical turn towards his stomach, and he would regale himself, when bilious, with one sort of drug after another, vowing he could keep up the fight as long as his insides could, until the time should come when he could eat whatever he pleased. Though not prone to dwell on his dyspepsia,

he diverted me occasionally with accounts of the hiccoughs he had had in Carlsbad or the pain in his liver at Aix.

As he became a warm friend of mine, with the usual positive inclination of irritable people when they form a regard, I soon made him, as well as his sister, fully acquainted with the business I was in, together with my hopes that she could in some way further it. I explained to her the doubtful standing I had with the mother and the unfortunate incident that had served me so poor a turn with the daughter.

"I think," said Mrs. Egerton, "you have done right to take counsel in this matter, for it seems to me everything depends on your having no talk at all with Miss Betty until you can have a long one. Now, if her mother finds you're here you may have a good deal of trouble in getting a long one, or any at all."

"That is exactly my own conclusion," I added. "In fact, I am afraid even to write for fear the note gets into the wrong hands."

"Oh, don't write, whatever you do," cried she, "for even if it should get only into Betty's hands it might do you more harm than good. When a subject once grows cold between lovers, the only way to set it right is by word of mouth."

What we agreed was that I should be seen as little as possible in public places until Mrs. Egerton had done what she could towards acquaintance with the Sinclairs, whom she made no doubt of meeting soon. Thus it speedily fell out, for in a few days she reported her having come upon them at a large reception, where she herself had assisted the hostess in receiving guests.

"So they are here at last," I cried. "And was——"

"Yes," replied Mrs. Egerton, with a laugh, "Betty was there, too. My dear Mr. Cameron, that is the prettiest, wisest face in the world. I am delighted with your choice. The game is more interesting than ever."

As may be imagined, nothing could be more to a sprightly woman's mind than accomplishing a meeting between two lovers, whom no good reason was keeping apart. But the thing obviously required some strategy. Betty could not be invited to the house until the mother and Mrs. Egerton had exchanged visits, nor was it certain that a pretext could be devised by which Betty would be induced to come, it being inconsistent with her dignity that she should be invited there for no other reason than to meet me.

It was finally determined I should pass a few days at Genoa. During that period some progress could be made without fear of my being seen by Mrs. Sinclair, who, for aught we knew, might keep Betty well under her wing should such a hawk as myself be seen at hand. Accordingly I quitted the place, remained a week at Genoa, and was at length rewarded with a telegram from my fair champion requesting my immediate return.

Never was summons more punctually obeyed. Hurrying back to Mentone, I found at my inn a note from Mrs. Egerton bidding me be at her house at five the next day. With what impatience did I pass that night! How many fine speeches did I frame to move a heart that wanted only truth!

The morrow came at length. A stupid luncheon was dispatched, suit after suit was tried and discarded, necktie after necktie was untied and flung aside, before my dress became such as I was sure reflected the height

of the mode. Then being driven to Mrs. Egerton's, I was at last within her gate.

I was greeted by her brother, who informed me how the affair had been arranged. Mrs. Egerton, advancing on the acquaintance, had exchanged visits with Mrs. Sinclair, and making a point of pleasing Betty, had soon captured that gentle person's regard. Betty was now with his sister, but the latter, when he should report my arrival, would leave her on some excuse and let me see her first alone. Nor did Betty yet dream of my being there. The most unpleasant news was that Catesby was constantly attending Betty and would come to take her home at seven.

CHAPTER LVII

BETTY AT MENTONE

UNFORTUNATE indeed the man whose memory has not consecrated to love some perfect hour. Never, surely, was lover afforded one more delightful in both scene and season than this of mine. From the veranda, through gardens and trees, which, in so sunny a region, the cool approach of winter had not yet despoiled, could be seen the tranquil Mediterranean, and from the pleasant South was borne the languorous air of Italy. Nature was in repose. Nothing appeared to disturb either sky or sea. A distant sail might here and there be descried, and, rising from the waters as evening came on, the autumn moon.

As it had been arranged, Mrs. Egerton, called by her brother, left Betty on some excuse or other, greeted me happily, and directed me with much pleasant excitement to a corner where Betty could be found beneath a pergola. Not losing a second, I hastened to that part of the house and in a moment was in her presence. The sweet girl had not dreamed I was within a hundred leagues of her. She rose, then seemed to sink back, then stepped forward to greet me with a smile so happy that no lover in the world could have asked for more. My impulse was to seize her in my arms, to settle the whole question in kisses and embraces. Luck, though,

was against me. Such a space was between where she stood and the spot at which she first saw me that a dozen long steps must be taken before I could be at her side. In consequence her maidenly dignity had time to recover itself.

You may know you are in love when you are sensitive to trivial neglect. That Betty had more cause than I to be a little cool did not at once occur to me. Had I not declared to her a few days ago that I loved her? Had I not come a long distance to see her? Could she not see that I loved her? Accordingly, I grew in turn reserved, and we took our seats in that sort of mind when nobody knows what to say.

"I suppose you are glad to be out of that bad town, Paris?" I remarked.

"Why do they call Paris bad?" replied she. "I was there a month or more and I saw nothing bad at all."

This, the natural experience of innocence, softened me a trifle, but I remembered my fancied wrongs sufficiently to maintain my reserve.

"It is very beautiful here," said I.

"Yes," answered she, "but I am tired of Europe. I love my own country best—not but I'm happy, you understand, very happy anywhere."

"That is the way with me," I added; "happy anywhere. I had a perfect stay in Paris."

"I am so glad," said Betty.

"Met some delightful people," I continued.

"So I hear," she replied.

"You hear?"

"No matter, Mr. Cameron; I really paid little attention to it."

I saw immediately that Catesby had probably sent

her some accounts of my little dinner.

"If there is anything I ought to explain," said I, "I certainly should be glad to do so—ought, in fact, to be given the chance."

"I really don't see, Mr. Cameron," answered Betty, "that I care to ask you for any explanation; besides, I don't know that there is anything worth explanation."

Never is beauty so tantalising as when it is slipping away from you. I felt like giving up to both anger and entreaty, for she looked pretty to the last degree, and I knew my rival had been turning my mistake to account. But I, who was so sure of her loving me when I cared little for her, was now quick to doubt it when I had both fallen in love with her and had avowed my affection.

Deeply piqued, I was actually on the point of leaving her, when there occurred one of those incidents which sometimes change the whole course of events. From below us, in a moment of silence after this remark of hers, there rose from a cottage half hidden in gardens and trees that sweet chorus of the monks in Semi-ramide with which, in plaintive or melancholy mood, some musician was then beguiling the hour of twilight. Wishing an excuse for silence, we both listened long enough to be affected by so soothing a strain. It was indeed a stroke of luck.

"Betty," said I, "if I leave you now, we may never meet again, and all I have to say is that nobody will ever love you any more than I do."

Now, what could result from so honest a statement as this, uttered both calmly and sadly, but the tender Betty should begin to melt. So, like a good general, I pushed my manœuvre farther. I got up to go.

"Now, don't do that," exclaimed she.

"Do you wish me to stay?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't know what I want," replied Betty. "I don't understand you at all," and with that buried her face in her handkerchief while she struggled with pride and tears.

There was nothing, of course, left to strategy. Seizing sweet Betty in my arms, though she tried to protest, I gave her fifty kisses and caresses in less time than it takes to tell about it.

Happy as gods for the moment, we disposed of the trouble about Trixy and the naughty repast in Paris without debate, but dull care was swift in pursuit. What would her mother, what her father, say? They were against me, of that she was certain. Catesby, yes, Catesby or a title, that was her mother's desire. As for the father, he had expressed himself opposed to my attentions even since he had heard of my inheritance, and Betty declared amid her confessions that she would not go to the altar without her parents' consent. She might never marry the man they desired, but she could not think of marrying the man they opposed. This she qualified only in the degree that, after a long trial of their humour, she might, if convinced they were unreasonable, exercise an independence, but only after waiting upon them most patiently.

"I am their only child," she said, "and, indeed, Charles, indeed, they have never denied me anything in the world. I must not break their hearts."

"Leave them both to me, Betty," I replied, confidently. "I'll dispose of that part of the business."

I was very much pleased with myself, just as if I could brush aside legions with a waive of my hand.

Then we were joined by the others, who, though they affected not to notice anything, soon admitted they had been in the plot, which, for Betty's sake, it was argued I was desperate to make succeed. It was also explained that I had been so bad that Betty had to punish me severely. The brother then declared that it was my misbehaviour that had won the day, that women at heart preferred the man whom they found it necessary to forgive, and that no man had ever been loved long by woman for virtue alone.

CHAPTER LVIII

VERY BAD NEWS

IRRECOVERABLE moments! Would that memory could restore the scenes of youth and of pure, requited love. We were the happiest of mortals that evening, which, as the shadows fell on the bosom of the sea, afforded to our hearts the fulness of repose. Betty was a picture of loveliness. As I have said before, she had grown sweeter in the little maturity gained since we separated in America, a trifle more delicate, though retaining the dimpled charm of girlhood.

Mrs. Egerton, delighted at the success of her strategy, insisted upon our dining with them on the veranda; nor was this repast the less enjoyable because of the arrival of Catesby, who came to accompany Betty to her home. In fact, the fellow's presence was, in a sense, just what I desired, as I could let him see what he had lost. With the utmost pleasure I assumed towards Betty a manner not to be mistaken, which she was too happy to conceal in return. His was the only discontented face at the table.

The next morning I was up early to prepare myself for a meeting with Mrs. Sinclair at an hour mentioned by Betty as the most favourable. About eleven I called, in a suit conforming to the most minute regulations of the prevailing mode precisely for that hour. The old dame received me coldly, I assure you, though diplomatic enough to be agreeable in manner.

With no small confidence I went to my business. I told her I had loved Betty a long time, had come to France to tell her so, and had learned from her own lips the night before that she loved me. To this the mother replied—which was her first lie—that this news was a great surprise to her, and also—which was her second—that she wished Betty never to marry at all. I could not help adding, as a mere incident, that a great change in my fortune would enable me to provide excellently for her daughter, a reflection which drew from her the greatest lie of all, that money was the last thing she would consider in a matter of marriage. The interview ended with her assuring me that she would report to her husband the honour I had done them, but, as he would not return from London for some time, I could not expect an immediate reply.

I was no such novice as not to see I was merely put off. Accordingly, after returning as much hypocrisy as I got, I took my leave with a determination to see the father at once. From Betty I already knew he would be home that very night, so the next day, exceedingly impatient, I went to the house again at an hour when I ascertained, through an exchange of notes with Betty, he could be seen. The dear girl was, as one may conceive, in so excited a mind as scarcely to be able to sleep. Avowing her love in the tenderest lines, she urged me to do everything possible to please her father, as his approval was still indispensable to her.

When I was at last in the old man's presence my courage somewhat failed me, for, recalling the clever manner in which he had rid himself of me that night in New York, I felt I had to do with a soulless old hypocrite. While he received me with politeness, I

could see it was without pleasure. I began to hesitate.

"Don't be afraid, my dear young friend. Don't, I may say, beat about the bush. Your errand, as I already know, is a perfectly honourable one. You wish to marry Betty."

"Why, yes, sir," I replied; "that is what I wish to see you about."

"No offence, Mr. Cameron, no offence. While I cannot give you the least encouragement, I appreciate your kindly interest in my little girl. You are going to have a brilliant future. I can see success in every line of your face, my boy, but I haven't the slightest intention of letting even a clever fellow like you get the best of me in so important a bargain. No, I must have Betty with me for some years yet. Her mind is still unformed, and before consigning her to any husband I must mature and perfect the spiritual part of her, the soul of my child. A parent has a great obligation. Mr. Cameron."

Knowing from Betty that her father had expressed himself as perfectly willing that she should marry Catesby, I was not deceived by the old sinner's cant, but, divining that dollars and cents were at the bottom of all this, I proceeded, after declaring everything to be inferior to religious instruction, to say that I would not so early have aspired to Betty if the gods had not rained on me so golden a shower since his family had sailed to France.

"My dear boy," he exclaimed, "your purse is the last item in my reckoning. Your own health and character are riches enough, if I could consider the marriage at all."

I perceived my money was no news to him, yet,

unable to see what other objection was in his mind, I dwelt on the extent of my inheritance as some recommendation, since it would enlarge his daughter's luxury and opportunity to do good.

"Well," he said at length, "if this matter of fortune were of any importance, which it is not, I would say to you in conclusion, as one of your best friends, that you should not, as the saying is, count your chickens before they're hatched, my boy. Don't be too sure about all this fortune."

Feeling certain now that his opposition grew out of secret doubts concerning my bank account, I hastened to give him assurances, explaining that it was no mere hope, that my uncle was already dead, and that I was actually in possession as administrator.

"Yes, yes," he replied in a way that showed he was tired of the interview; "yes, I know all about that. What I meant was that even then mistakes occur, you know. It is no use, my good fellow. No, I care nothing about all these worldly considerations. I cannot give up Betty. No, not yet. Let me show you our pretty little grounds here."

With this he began to get rid of me, and, thoroughly annoyed as well as perplexed, I soon took my leave.

Returning to my hotel, I sat down in disgust. After a moment I noticed an envelope half hidden under some papers on my table. It was a telegram. I opened it, saw it was signed by Olcott, and slowly read:

"Return immediately. Very bad news. A will discovered."

Stupidly I read these words fully fifty times. At first I would not, could not, believe them. The dis-

patch was three days old and had been carelessly delivered. Then I saw corroboration in the actions of old Sinclair, who had probably already been advised of the real truth through some other source, perhaps through some inquiry by the envious and vigilant Catesby. Perhaps the message was forged, in order to turn me home. No, the cable office produced the original, and that night came another, urging me to lose no time whatever.

Not until long afterwards did I learn that my ill luck had been in the Paris edition of the *Herald* about three days and familiar news in the Riviera to such as knew me.

CHAPTER LIX

I RETURN TO AMERICA

TO telegraph for a berth on the next steamer from Cherbourg, to pack my trunks, to send a note by a well-tipped messenger to Betty begging a meeting at Mrs. Egerton's at eleven the next morning, these were my first hurried steps. At the same time I cabled Olcott my intention to return immediately. By the best of luck I was not without sufficient money to avoid, as the saying is, running my face for cash.

Nothing in the loss of fortune is so bad as having to let others know it, a necessity which, to many, is worse than the loss itself, and this weakness I was so little above as to resolve to report my troubles in the moderate aspect of a not unexpected contest with some discontented heirs. Naturally I hurried to the Egertons that evening. Mrs. Egerton, though not feeling well, and the brother, though more bilious than I had ever seen him, received me cordially in my ill-concealed anxiety. Indeed, I think my troubles did them good, for it is a sorry truth, to say the thing more broadly than did La Rochefoucauld, that, when we are depressed, nothing so cheers us as discussing the fall of our friends. In proportion as I felt worse, they themselves felt better, until they sufficiently recovered their spirits to revive my own. When I left them it was with the

feeling that they really valued my friendship without regard to my purse.

During the night, after Mrs. Egerton had gone to bed, the old bachelor smoked late with me on the veranda, where it was a pleasure—and with me, perhaps, a last one—to gaze idly on the moonlit sea. This man, at heart very kind indeed, talked cynically of earthly happiness. Marriage, he declared, was the oddest delusion of all.

"People," said he, "point to marriages that are undeniably happy. Examine one, and what do you find? That there has been little shrinkage of fortune or station during the whole of it. Each year the husband's affairs improve; where they began with one servant, they have risen to keeping three; where they used to walk, they now drive. These are the happy marriages. How many happy marriages have been found between couples where the husband, by misfortune, has lost what he set out with?"

"Surely," I replied, "a woman's love is not based on her husband's purse. Suppose he does lose his fortune, but keeps his dignity?"

"Dignity!" he exclaimed. "You forget. He can't lose his fortune and keep his dignity at the same time."

"What!" I cried. "That would be a terrible state of affairs."

"Yes," answered he, "a terrible state it is. "Just listen to me now. This modern world is based on commerce. Business is the modern substitute for war as the vocation of males. Hector could tell Andromache that the field of battle was the sphere for men, but the modern woman knows that the making of money is the sphere for men. Can't you see that, in the middle ages

or antiquity, a woman could not have the same pride in her hero, after he had been several times mauled in combat, as she had before, however much the poor devil had done his best? He had fallen below the requirements of his sex according to the age he lived in."

Admitting to myself there was something in this, I made no reply.

"Now," he continued, "a modern wife sees her husband drifting backwards every year, while a neighbour's husband appears to be doing better. After she has accepted or invented one explanation after another, she begins to feel that perhaps her man is not quite so able as the other. That does him no good, my boy. Finally she has to deny herself a number of things necessary to her station among the other women, has to wear shabby gowns or receive poor medical attention. What about love then, eh? To be sure, she doesn't despise him, but she grows fretful, feels hurt, as the expression is. Then it is, ten to one, quarrels arise that would never have been heard of in a favourable train of fortune."

I was too young to appreciate his meaning.

"Now," he added, "all this applies more to Americans than to these Europeans. Here the woman, being placed on less equality with man, is more satisfied to put up with his lot. She feels she has less right to dispute with him, provided he remains kind. Besides, money is not so much the test here of a man's worth. He may be less successful than others in making or keeping it, and yet retain a good deal of dignity, because in these old countries he may fall back on family or learning as his boast, and if his wife sees him respected or sought for these, she may feel they have

things in their home that certain other persons would be exceedingly glad to have."

Thus the old cynic delighted his mind with rambling chat until I happened to speak despondently of my present hopes of Betty. I even remarked that probably a fellow who had perhaps lost everything had best drop all thought of marrying a girl brought up in luxury.

"Did ever any one hear the like!" he exclaimed testily. "Why the devil should you do that? That girl would make you happy in a hovel. Are you going to let that sneak, Catesby, cheat you out of her? Every time I see that fellow's pale skin I think of Pope's line about Hervey, 'The mere white curd of ass' milk.'"

"Don't talk to me about that fellow!" I cried. "If I didn't love Betty at all, I'd see that he never got her. No, sir. This business will end all right. You'll have a cablegram from me some afternoon here that will satisfy every one."

He opened a bottle of champagne, in which we toasted Betty two or three times, and I quitted him in good spirits.

Betty was there at eleven the next day, and, as I had arrived before her, it devolved upon me to tell her the news. Already depressed by her parents' account of my rejection, she was deeply disturbed at my incurring, as we feared, a loss of the only thing that could possibly recommend me to them; nor could she refrain from tears when I announced my having to hurry across the ocean at once. Indeed, she was so moved as to bestow upon me, for the first time, a voluntary caress, and we passed an hour or two in the most exquisite interchange of sentiment, of sighs and hopes and lovers' vows. Taking a little courage from a sanguine turn which

gradually came on me, she endeavoured to play a few strains on the piano, until her heart failed her in that old air from Norma, so sweetly mournful.

After arranging a means of corresponding through Mrs. Egerton, I was at length compelled to press her hand for the last time and to say good-bye in order to catch a train that would not wait for lovers. This being the greatest pain I had ever suffered, I left Betty with such sadness as I was sure I never could feel again.

CHAPTER LX

MY VOYAGE HOMEWARD

WITHIN two days I took boat at Cherbourg for New York in a more depressed frame of mind than I had been in during all that penniless period before my recent good fortune. They who have never had anything commonly possess at least hope, but they who have lost everything generally lose hope with the rest.

It being night when I went aboard, I knew nothing, as I cared nothing, about my fellow-passengers; but the next morning I was delighted to meet Senator Baxom, who, with his wife, was returning to America. The statesman was as pleased as I at the meeting. Noticing before long that I wore a rather long face, not due to any apparent seasickness, he remarked that I was probably as reluctant as most of my countrymen nowadays to come back to the land of the free and the home of the brave. Upon this I made a frank confession of the change in the weather-vane of my luck, that there had turned up a will in which I appeared to be entirely left out, and that nothing could have given my uncle more joy, in my opinion, than an opportunity to exclude me. This led to a long discussion of both his life and surroundings, the Senator evincing his curiosity by many sagacious questions. After I had done, he crunched

his cigar more firmly than ever in the corner of his mouth and, looking at me shrewdly, said:

"Cameron, I'll bet you ten to one this damned will is a blackmailing forgery. What's the reason it's been so long in turning up? That Dole woman and that chippy you met in Albany! Depend on it, now, there's an extra card in the pack."

I could only reply that I hoped he was right.

"Haven't the slightest doubt of it," continued the Senator. "Nine times in ten, to-day, when a man dies somebody either makes a will for him or breaks the one he made. A more rascally practice than the attacks made on wills nowadays I don't know."

"Of course," I observed, from a different point of view, "it may become a man's duty to attack one if he is wronged."

"Wronged and be hanged," retorted the Senator. "These will-breakers are all blackmailers."

"You see," I proceeded, "I was thinking that, supposing this will of my uncle's, supposing, I say, that he did make it, which I don't believe he did, it might not be just to myself to acquiesce in it. I——"

"Oh, certainly," exclaimed he; "acquiesce in nothing. If the old devil left you out, you ought to fight."

"I am glad you think so," I replied; "though I suppose it would do me no good, if the thing is genuine."

"Yes, but make the infernal thieves give you something, anyway," he insisted. "You have your legal right to litigate and to keep them out of it all until they compromise."

The Senator and his lady both showed me undiminished attention, something I can never forget, since nothing is more unusual in a country in which wealth

is the most important possession. Our friends in America are not so base as to desert us in adversity, but they are seldom so proud of us, a circumstance not so commonly true in countries where society is regulated on blood or intellect as well as on riches, since he who loses or never had the latter may still be an object of general envy by reason of the former.

The Senator during the remainder of the voyage put life in me by his denunciation of the gang of forgers, as he called them, while unfolding to me at the same time a large project in which he had been inducing an English syndicate to invest. In this, he assured me, he could provide me an income during any litigation about the estate, but, as this scheme might be a few months delayed in case of war with Spain, he advised me to make the most of an acquaintance he had been forming for me on the steamer with one of the most prominent railway men in the country.

This gentleman, a short, cold-eyed man, was the incarnation of those maxims in which our men of affairs abound. Given over to the making of money, our whole population from sea to sea has a character in which severity in business is as much a virtue as giving or enduring pain was in ancient Sparta. What other country than our own invented "Time is money," a principle by which every social courtesy during the hours of business is regarded as folly and the polite manners of all other countries are thrown off as an encumbrance. "Business is business" is another of our mottoes, a saying by which we justify ourselves when we drive from our employment a noble fellow who, we admit, had every virtue in the world, and was merely slow, or when we mercilessly ruin an honest rival by

a losing competition. The whole country is one camp of money-makers. These cold maxims are accepted as virtue. The young, brought up to them, emulate their fathers in this Laconian discipline of modern war.

This little Ulysses of our railways had very little to say, fearing it would cost him something in some way to let anything escape, as Homer would call it, the hedge of his teeth; nor could I have hoped to have any chats with him if he had not perceived the friendship of a Senator who had several years remaining in his term. As he seldom went out of his apartments on the ship, he was not sorry, perhaps, to let me talk to him occasionally by way of diverting him, so one day he remarked:

"Mr. Cameron, if you will call at my office after you get your affairs in some order I shall be glad to see you, and if you need any sort of employment at that time, I think I could make you a secretaryship that I have in mind."

I thanked him, for I knew he would not have me call at his office for pleasure. He continued:

"I am frank to say I would rather have had a chance to form my judgment of you ashore than here, where none of your business habits, if you have any, can be seen. Now, in town, if I should see a young man at lunch taking a glass of beer or wine, no matter how temperate he might be, I should have no use for him, this not because I should be afraid of his turning sot, but because the fellow had no more sense than to let other men get on faster. Any man in America who takes spirits at noon, or eats heartily at noon, is just so much slower than one who doesn't. Drink, if it doesn't make a man talk too much, makes his wits

foggy or drowsy. Besides, it makes him waste time at the table."

I had the sense to concede all this; so he, at his leisure, added:

"It is the same with a young man who plays on the piano or some such instrument. Even if he is not what you call a musician, I still have no use for him. What is wrong with him is this: If his mind is consumed with the desire to make money, as it should be, he can't retain either the time or inclination to thrum on those keys. I don't know why it is, but our strong young men don't have these habits."

CHAPTER LXI

I FIND LILLIAN ABOARD

I T was probably the third day at sea, when, walking alone, I heard a rapid tapping on a stateroom window. Turning toward it, I saw the golden hair and smiling face of Lillian.

"Why, Lillian!" I exclaimed, as soon as I could join her. "This is good luck in——"

"Hush! Not Lillian, dear fellow," she replied. "I'm *incog* here; not out of these rooms, either, except at night. I'm utterly tired of being stared at, so I sleep all day. But, Charles, isn't this sudden, and——"

"Haven't you heard, Lillian, about the will?"

"The will, Charles! Don't jest," she answered in a tone of no small excitement.

"Yes, there's one been found," said I, unable, however, to give her particulars beyond the meagre message sent me.

"But which will does Olcott mean?" she asked impatiently.

"Which?" I asked. "One's bad enough. You speak as if there might——"

"Yes, yes," responded she. "I'm disturbed about the thing."

"Well, let the worst come of it to me, I hope," said I, "that the best is coming to you."

"No, no, Charles, not that. You don't know what you're talking about, you dear man. That provoking Olcott, to give you no particulars. Men are so absurd about some things."

For my life I could not quite understand her perturbation, except that, having some time ago given up hope of a legacy, she was now reviving her expectations. Her friendship for me, however, was so apparent that I put upon everything she did the kindest thoughts.

"What a mature fellow you've become since I first met you," she remarked one day as I caught her looking oddly at me.

While we saw each other frequently before reaching port, she stayed within her apartment altogether; nor did she see any others than me except, towards the last, the Senator and his wife, who were enthusiastic at her sweetness no less than her beauty.

"Cameron," whispered the Senator to me, "you're a devil of a fellow in gathering beauties. There's that Gordon woman on your list, then little Sinclair, and now Lillian Evanson. If I were managing a theatrical house, hanged if I wouldn't engage you to pick the girls! God, this Evanson woman makes an old fellow like me feel as if he were eighteen again!"

Thus we beguiled our time, and, although I had much to think of in my inheritance, I did not fail, between my daily chats with Lillian, to talk, as occasion permitted, with Worryman, too, for the world was apparently before me again in all its rigours.

Meanwhile, I was piqued because in several conversations Lillian betrayed not the least curiosity concerning Betty, whose portrait I at length offered her one

day with an affectation of unconcern. She looked at it quickly and returned it in a degree of abruptness by a turn of her wrist, saying, after a moment's hesitation:

"She's very pretty—very, in that style. You always were lucky."

However, it was a dry sort of compliment from so pleasant a source.

"Lillian," I remarked, "you've some trouble on your dear old head. Now——"

"Oh, dear, no, nothing," she replied. "This new play, of course——" And then she rattled on about that.

"By the way," I inquired, "as I didn't come aboard *incog* like yourself, why didn't you send for me at once? You surely saw my name in the printed list."

She coloured slightly as she replied:

"What list? Oh, yes, to be honest, I did see your name, but made up my mind to let you alone. Then I saw you passing the window, and was too glad, you old rascal, to conceal it any longer."

Some cloud was evidently on Lillian's spirits. Once I caught her looking at me with an expression of deep regard, and when she saw that it was noticed she remarked:

"I was just perceiving how mature you've grown lately."

"I hope I'm none the worse for it, Lillian."

"Ye-es. It's becoming to you. You know, you seemed rather young, even boyish, when I first met you, though already beyond your years in a good many things."

"Lord, how I loved you then!" I remarked with a

smile, in which, though, she scarcely joined.

"You speak of it pretty heartily in the past tense. Is it so delightful to be cured?"

"Who says I am cured?" I asked, being something of a flirt myself.

"Don't pretend now," she replied, a little teased. "You don't have to make believe to Lillian."

On another occasion she fell to talking of my boyhood, of my mother and my playmates.

"How droll you must have seemed as a child. Have you a photograph of yourself in those days?"

Let me, however, even distantly approach the subject of my uncle, she would become little less than depressed. Something, it was plain, had occurred which she could never disclose.

CHAPTER LXII

THE WILL THAT RUINED ME

THE use of wealth is not to make you happy, which is impossible, but, by protecting you against want, to save you from being more unhappy than you are. This remains its comfort so long as wealth remains. When wealth is lost, however, we are more miserable than we ever could have been had we not had it at all. These reflections soon crowded upon me after my return, when I found myself without other cash than what I could get from Olcott, even before I had time to devour his narrative of my troubles.

It was a short story. Not long after my departure the vindictive *Whirl* had set one of its reporters upon the question of my inheritance, with the result that vague stories both of my extravagance and of my uncle's dislike of me began to appear. Why, it was asked, had a relative by whom, it was now known, I had been detested, omitted to make a will without which every dollar he had should descend to me as certainly as fate? Was he not known to be a careful man in his affairs? Was it likely he would pass by the friends whom he loved and the servants he had had so many years to leave all to a worthless nephew?

This was the first result of the *Whirl's* investigation at Albany. Then appeared worse. Had I not visited

Albany a few days before his death? Why? Had I been invited there? Next, who was this young woman that I spent the evening with? The *Whirl* would see. Its readers should know.

Then came another stage. Why had I slipped off to Europe so suddenly? Why had I lingered in New York so long and then taken to my heels in a trice? Had a certain Maud Start anything to do with it? Had I not taken her to England with me? Had she not been intimate with my uncle, very intimate, indeed? Had we ever talked about a will and how it might be gotten out of the way?

Finally the *Whirl's* faithful men had brought the will, the long-lost will, to light, an instrument I had endeavoured to obtain with a view to destroy it, and which I had at least thought wholly lost to the knowledge of others, I, the official administrator, sworn to do my duty, so help me God!

Such was the course of these reptiles in their malice that I could hardly attend it either in the illustrated sheets that Olcott spread before me or in his own hurried account of their deviltry. My insipid-looking picture united with that of Maria Dole, Maud Start, and even of the butler, I passed in excitement to the one great question. This will, had Olcott seen it? What did it provide?

The original Olcott had seen, and its contents had been set out *verbatim* in all the daily press. By its terms there was given to charitable institutions, several of them, fifty thousand dollars each; to Maud Start, four hundred thousand dollars; to Maria Dole, a half million; to the other servants, smaller but liberal portions; to seven friends in Albany, about twenty thousand dol-

lars each; and, as to myself, seventy-five thousand dollars, which was to be forfeited in case I endeavoured to break the will.

"This is a forgery, must be a forgery," I cried.

"I am sorry to say," replied Olcott, "that, after examining samples of your uncle's signature to other documents and letters, it looks genuine to me."

"But where was it found?"

"In the office of a firm of lawyers in New York, that he used to consult occasionally, Short & Brown."

This intelligence seeming to settle the question, I buried my head in my hands beneath the blow.

"However," continued Olcott, "not to give you any hope, for I don't cling to the fact greatly myself, it is not known who drew the will."

"Not Short & Brown?"

"No. They say they know nothing of it; that, while they would do legal business for the old man and allowed him a compartment in their safe for papers of all sorts, some drawn by themselves, they did not draw this will. They think it's genuine, though."

During the next two days we had endless consultations with my lawyers, who, of course, assured me it was a serious business. In their company I examined the will at the office of Short & Brown, whom I regarded with suspicion, though they seemed very little to deserve it. It was witnessed by two of my uncle's servants who were not mentioned in it, and who, having been already interrogated at Albany by Olcott himself, had, while complaining bitterly of their being left out, admitted their attestation of the signature. Experts, too, had agreed there was no doubt of the signa-

ture's being in my uncle's own hand. It was dated about a year before his death.

If this will was a forgery, it was a clever scheme in more ways than that of handwriting. The legacy to me, for instance, was a strong temptation, should I be overwhelmed by the first appearances of genuineness, to acquiesce rather than forfeit so large a sum, while the distribution to all the servants next my uncle's person would assure their testifying to a hundred circumstances and utterances before his death to prove the existence of the document while he lived.

Why had not Short & Brown produced this will at once, was a natural question which these gentlemen answered without embarrassment, saying that after my uncle's death they had looked in his compartment and found nothing, reminding me that they had once made a fruitless search at my instance for all documents belonging to him whom I thought intestate. After my departure to Europe they had been sought twice by reporters of the *Whirl* and several times by Maria Dole, who had become exceedingly insistent as well as distrustful of the firm. Finally the will was found in the office upon a table beneath some comparatively recent accumulations of neglected business. Mr. Short had been unusually immersed in litigation in Florida, Mr. Brown unravelling some tangled corporation, and the junior members engulfed in fresh retainers, until the files had become disordered. The firm being in excellent standing, it was plain they were honest in this affair, by which, besides, they were not to profit, as they now declined to be retained by anybody connected with it.

Sad in heart I returned to Albany. A fat trust com-

pany being named as executor, it was clear I could do no less than resign at once, even though I should intend a contest of the will. Detestable situation! My accounts of what I deemed my own estate must now undergo a zealous examination. Why had I spent ten dollars on this or that? Why had I paid such fees to counsel? Why had I drawn a few hundred dollars on the faith of my own compensation?

But the ingratitude of bankers was what smote me to the soul. Of all the forms of trade, banking is undoubtedly the most one-sided. Its principle is that the bank shall lend the depositor his own money, exact security from him, and charge him interest, while the depositor shall lend the bank his average cash reserve without interest and without security. In vain will it be said that the deposit is at the depositor's check, for experience has established an average which assures a fair reinforcement of the deposits notwithstanding the checks. Why is it that after paying a note with interest we thank the banker? He sold us gold and we paid him for it. Do we thank a merchant when we pay him for our furniture?

These gentlemen, who had enjoyed my official deposits and had pressed on the heir and administrator whatever loans I had wanted, who had received me with so many smiles, and had encouraged my extravagance by reminding me that we had only one life to live or that I should have a good time while it did live, since I would be a long time dead, these financiers now became thoughtful. I applied, embarrassed for money, to one whose grin of welcome had been particularly broad before the infernal will turned up, for a thousand dollars to supply me while I looked about me

in the new situation. Though the ungrateful fellow had at that very moment full one hundred thousand cash by my deposits as administrator, he declared he was sorry he could not accommodate me, funds being unusually low. With some shame I reminded him I had at least seventy-five thousand by the will, upon which he seemed to remember that his funds were more plentiful and would have let me have something upon the security of a formal assignment of my legacy, when I told him I might attack the will and consequently be a man and risk the loss of the legacy. This caused his funds again to appear low, so I left him in disgust.

It was a miserable visit, for in the midst of my impecuniosity came the anger of my tradesmen, in whose favour my wasteful gang of servants had been running woeful and, until now, encouraged accounts. Indeed, notwithstanding these grocers and bakers and other vendors had been plainly in league with my people to rob me, they assailed me with virtuous whining to the point of insult, for these were my personal obligations and not chargeable to the estate. Against the servants, especially the rascally butler, I felt little less than rage, as the scoundrel, by reason of his legacy, was in a position to laugh in my face. Not a degree of courtesy did I find among them. In fact, they one and all regarded me as having tried to cheat them by concealing the will.

The last stroke was felt when I turned for money to an extravagant young acquaintance, whom I had repeatedly lent a hundred dollars. Assuring him my reluctance to press him, I told him what embarrassment I was in by reason of my many thoughtless expenditures. He told me he would pay me a part the following day, upon which I searched for him to no purpose

during the next twenty-four hours, for the lad had slipped to New York. There, however, I chanced to fall in with him at a prominent hotel.

"Ned," I said, "for the Lord's sake, help me with a hundred or two. I don't like to be borrowing from my friends, you know, when the other boys owe me something, in the present situation."

"Now, Cameron," this snipe had the impudence to reply, "you have got to learn some patience in this thing. You've got to be reasonable. I don't see what right you had to squander money by the thousands the past year, as you know you have, and then annoy a gentleman in this fashion. Excuse me, please. I'll attend to the thing, you may rest assured."

The difference in the way I was received at the clubs and public places of fashion would have embittered my mind had I not felt at heart sanguine of a restoration of my fortune, in which state of mind I derived benefit from this experience without other than brief vexation. Discontent, though, I could not wholly escape. Where I had formerly been eyed by others, I already found myself viewing the more successful with a degree of envy, for he who has once relished the world of fashion must either make others discontented by his eminence or be discontented himself for want of it. One or two dandies that had previously disliked me now went so far as to snub me, an indignity I felt infinitely more keenly than the neglect of such as, being little more fortunate than myself, merely avoided me, though they had formerly been at pains to fall in my way. We sometimes forgive insults from our inferiors, but never from our superiors.

I felt, in short, the experience of Walpole, who, after his fall, declared he now had the singular effect of scattering every cluster of gentlemen he happened to approach.

CHAPTER LXIII

A CONVERSATION

SINCE I had seen Conners pass me in the apartment house just before my sailing to Europe I had not doubted his being then on his way to Lillian, and had either he or she derived a nickel under the will, I should have been sure of mischief. As it was, I acquitted her promptly in my mind, nor, after an acquaintance of more than a year, could I persuade myself that she would wrong me.

She was now in town finishing her rehearsals, and, the opening night having come, I was glad to attend in such spirits as I could, resolving to try to see her after the play to congratulate her. In this I was agreeably anticipated. There was brought a message from Lillian herself that she especially desired to see me after the curtain.

Her triumph was complete. The house was tumultuously happy. Calls and recalls brought out the radiant queen, and, though I had ceased to love her, I lost not a moment in joining her at the close. What a vision she was, flushed with success.

"Come," said she, "come into my carriage. I must see you to-night or die."

I saw that she was in much excitement, but, as I laid it to the play, I made little of it.

"You were divine to-night," I said as we sank into our seats in the carriage.

"Ah, you dear fellow, you dear boy," she replied with much emotion. "I saw you sitting there and I thought of your first days in New York and how you adored me. I am miserable, miserable to-night."

Putting my arms around her, I enjoyed a kiss, for which a year before I would have exchanged my hopes of heaven. Not checking me, she added:

"Don't mistake all this, Charles. I'm the worst enemy you have, the worst you have. Tell the man to drive an hour through the park—until we stop him. I must, must talk with you."

By this time I was in no small excitement, as I perceived her perturbation arose from some unusual cause.

"Lillian," I asked, "what in the world is the matter with you?"

Leaning on me heavily, she took one of my hands in both her own, pressing it until it pained me.

"Charles, dear man, there's something I ought to have told you long ago, but couldn't."

It was some time before she spoke again, and then in a very low voice.

"That will, are you going to fight it, fight it hard?"

I assured her I was, adding that she was kind to feel so intensely about it.

"And what do your lawyers say? Is it hopeless, hopeless, Charles?"

"It's pretty bad, Lillian, pretty bad."

"Oh, I feared that," she continued. Then, her voice sinking lower, she whispered:

"That is not the true will. There is another, another remembering you."

"You mean the one that fellow Conners tells of?" I exclaimed.

"No, a later one—the only one. Conners has a story of one three years ago. He is in love with my Lizette, but knows nothing of the later one. He only knows he witnessed something. I must tell you all."

Here she paused a moment.

"Charles, two weeks before your uncle died he executed the cruellest will that man ever drew. He was the most selfish man that ever lived. We had quarrelled. I had told the old libertine to leave me forever, to go back to Maud Start or whom he pleased. Ugh! It makes my flesh creep to think of him. We had a scene—two or three of them, I don't know how many. The man was crazy about me, crazy. Well, it had to come, sooner or later, this breaking off, and, as for his diamonds and the like, I wish I had never seen them, now that I shall be forced to be in everybody's mouth as the mistress of that old dotard."

"What do you mean? They never said quite that, Lillian, and now it's all in the past," I said, too sorry for her to press a question about the will.

"Oh, not past—only to come," she responded. "Charles, that brute, that ingenious old fiend, drew a will leaving me two hundred thousand dollars, because, as he says it, it is in payment—think of it!—in payment of my services as his—you know what I mean. I can't mention that vile word. He used it, though. And it's a lie, lie, lie."

The poor beauty could do nothing but weep. All I could exclaim was:

"Throw the cursed thing in the fire, if you have it."

"And beggar you?" she cried; "beggar you? All the rest is bequeathed to you."

I almost gasped in amazement.

"He flung it at my feet in a rage," she went on, "and took the train. Then he became paralysed on the train, they say. No, I believe he was lucid for a day or two."

I sat in silence, and then said slowly:

"Lillian, if you have this will, no mortal but you and me shall ever know of it. I hope you've destroyed it."

"Never! Oh, we poor things of the stage are bad enough, God pity us! with never an hour of home and every man on earth trying to pull us down—bad enough, but we're not so cold-blooded as some of the social queens of Fifth Avenue. We have hearts. Yes, there's our curse."

"Lillian," I resumed, "this is a sorry piece of news, but, dear old girl, I never in God's world will permit that thing to come to light. My God, what would I think of myself!"

"But it shall be produced. I'll rob no creature on this earth. I'll not rob you, Charles, never that. Oh, Charles, I've been struggling with this a month or more. Think what lives we women lead on the stage, to conceal such feelings as I had! Oh, if you could only win that suit, defeat that other will and be the heir by law, how easily I could burn that piece of paper! I thought of waiting—waiting to see how it would come out, but it may take years, and why should you hope to break the thing? What if I should have died without telling you? I never wronged any one in my life—except myself, and there's poor father loving the ground I walk on—what will he say? It will kill him, kill him, and he so sweetly blind to everything."

So great was her misery that it was some time before I could compose her mind, and nearly two o'clock before I left her with a voluntary assurance that nobody should hear a word of this, and that, for the present, any talk of disclosure was quite unnecessary, nor was I able to think a moment of my own advantage at the price of shame to her.

Before leaving her I examined in her room the momentous document, which she was keeping in a small safe with her jewels. Perusing it eagerly but attentively, I was left not the slightest reason to doubt its genuineness, for it was written from first to last in his own hand, in length only about three large letter sheets, and concluding with legal language, as well as properly witnessed. As to the witnesses (and Conners was one), it would not follow that they knew its contents, and as to the legal form, those my uncle could easily have copied from his earlier will, so the secret was yet probably with us two, considering that no witness or other person had yet referred to this.

I could conceive the malicious grin of the bad old man as he placed the woman in temptation between money and disgrace, and perhaps insured himself the triumph among other libertines of having possessed the beauty of the town.

Walking home at three in the morning, I mused with conflicting feelings on my peculiar fate in being poor while rich, and in being unable to take possession of what belonged to me without becoming little better than a cur.

CHAPTER LXIV

I CONTEST THE WILL

WHEN we discover in a friend some unexpected mark of declining years or fortune, we lose a degree of respect for him and also a little of our interest in him, though we would cut our tongues out rather than admit either even to ourselves. When a friend loses his youth, we are sorry; when he loses his fortune, we are very sorry; when he loses both, we are very sorry, indeed. How clearly do we perceive the extent of his losses! It is wonderful how quick we are to sniff his decline, wonderful how grieved we are that just at this inconvenient season it is so difficult to spare anything for his assistance.

These disagreeable reflections began to crowd upon me a good deal when, discovering that I should have to turn my hand to something speedily, I applied to several gay acquaintances to keep me in mind for a place. I found myself in debt to two or three banks, my income cut off, the public advised of my loss of fortune, and the world rushing on with its affairs as if I had never existed.

The Olcotts, though, remained zealously true. Without letting me know it beforehand, the generous fellow discharged my debts and placed in bank a thousand dollars to my credit, after which we betook ourselves

to considering a definite plan of action. Around his table with his good wife, who insisted that one of those women was at the bottom of it all, we tried to decide whether it were better to renounce the seventy-five thousand dollars and fight for the greater fortune.

Such a question being not easily decided, we of course repaired to a firm of lawyers in New York, for those in Albany, though on my side, did not seem to be positive. It is human nature to like, even in advisers whom we desire to advise us coolly, such as appear to be pretty sure we are right, for we are convinced by arguments that we like to hear, and hope is a willing listener.

The learned gentlemen we now consulted, after expressing the profoundest respect for my Albany counsel, and telling me, what I already knew, that it was a devilish serious case, agreed that, if they could get the matter into the Federal court, there was a chance, while, if it had to be brought in the State courts, there was no telling which way it would be decided. This making me warm for the Federal tribunals, I soon discovered that, on account of the laudable ingenuity with which they were constructed, it is past the understanding of the best lawyers in the land to know either how to get in or how to get out of them, in addition to which, so fickle is their sensitive jurisdiction, that many persons, after having a cause in them whole years, are suddenly thrown out because during the entire litigation they have never been in court at all. We then fell to discussing the State judges, among whom our senior counsel declared old Boggs of Albany a really great jurist, while if the cause should ever come before a certain other, whom he did not care to name,

we might as well sell our rights for a song to begin with.

On the merits neither gentleman was in a hurry to express an opinion. It might be a forgery, this signature, and it might not be. One thing was clear, it was a clever forgery, if any at all, in shutting the mouths of all the servants by so many gifts, in conciliating the courts by public benefactions, and in holding out to me a snug sum to induce surrender.

They promised to suggest a plan of attack in a few days, so we left them in order to get the press, or a part of it, at once on our side, Olcott declaring that, in this age, no considerable lawsuit can safely be left to the law. Public opinion must be educated at once. With this in view, Olcott immediately gave out interviews to journals bitterly hostile to the *Whirl*, directly charging the whole business to be a malicious invention. These communications I carefully prepared with his aid, but, as I might expose myself to contradictions subsequently on the stand, if I should now have much to say in print, I declined the importunities of several reporters to give them an interview myself, saying, with much dignity, that I preferred to try my case in the courts, and would have been glad if my friend, Mr. Olcott, had, despite his zeal, remained silent for the present.

The press in opposition to the *Whirl* now became our most active detectives. Lie after lie was created or refuted. Maria Dole was forthwith hounded by reporters, and Maud Start connected with fifty bad affairs.

Encouraged by my own clamour, I now formally began the attack. Within two weeks after my return

from Europe I filed a contest, and, receiving no offer of compromise from the other side, I found myself confronting several years of litigation without a dollar in my pocket or any calling for my support.

From Senator Baxom I received the most cordial support, by which I mean a direct offer of a loan, together with a letter to Worryman. Accepting the latter, I repaired to his office, where, after much delay by reason of his being often away and the rest of the time hedged by millionaires, I finally obtained an interview.

During all this period not a word had I breathed either to Olcott or my lawyers of what I had learned from Lillian—a hard struggle at times in not revealing it to the former. To keep it from the lawyers was, in a sense, easier, as the penalty, I foresaw, would be their insisting on making it known. To my greater uneasiness I also discovered in their general talk about a possible new will, that it was a crime to keep one concealed, in fact, pretty nearly as bad as to forge one. Was I “concealing,” or Lillian, poor creature, or both?

These reflections, the uncertainty of lawsuits, a real friendship for Lillian, now brought me gradually to the conclusion that I would withdraw my contest, accept, if legally I now could get it, the seventy-five thousand, and forego my hope of riches—a hard struggle in my mind, as the reader may easily imagine.

CHAPTER LXV

THE YOUNG PRESIDENT

ON my first meeting with Worryman I found him in his inmost office, seated in a chair, around which, at work on various parts of his body, were a barber, a bootblack and a manicure. In one hand he held a telephone and a cigar, while telegrams were spread in his lap or were held in readiness by one of his clerks, from all which, discerning the gentleman to be somewhat engaged, I concluded the occasion was little to my purpose. However, he quickly nodded to me and, assuring me he must be in Boston without a moment's delay, desired I should come again.

Pleased that he should so easily recall my face, I sought him two days later, after luncheon, which makes even our tyrants of finance a trifle softer.

"I remember you, Mr. Cameron," he said, without delay in coming to the point, "and, as you state you would like a place for a while, I think I can accommodate you both for your own sake and that of Senator Baxom, who has lately sent me a few lines in your favour. The Senator is one of our broadest public men and, though my properties have reached a point where we care little or nothing as to what they do at Washington, I like to oblige him. Now, to make a short story of it, a few friends of mine have just bought a little property in the West, a small one of about one

thousand miles, and need a confidential man during at least the first year of their new administration. I will give you a note to Mr. Bigbee, the gentleman we have made president. He'll take care of you at once. Glad to have seen you again, Mr. Cameron."

With this, calling a stenographer, he gave me a note of introduction to Bigbee, a few cold lines which, if they were to be read by Bigbee as they sounded when they fell from Worryman, would make my appointment a certainty. Bigbee I found that afternoon. To reach this pompous numbskull was more difficult than to get at his great superior, for he was merely the son of a multi-millionaire, and had the desire, without the sense, to figure in the world as a leader of business.

It was fully two hours that he required for his luncheon, the effect of which was to make him vainer and more stupid than he was in the morning. I disliked him immediately, but was fairly successful in concealing what I felt.

"Delighted to meet you, my dear young man," he said; "a friend of Senator Baxom, I believe. I imagine those public men have a lot of friends on their hands in this way. Ah! Will do what I can for you, though you see I am nearly swamped with urgent business."

Here, without inviting me to be seated, he appeared to become lost in a long telegram that lay before him. Then, as if recollecting me, he murmured a shade of apology, was lost in another telegram, and finally begged I would excuse him until two the following day.

This engagement I kept in a very ill humour.

"Ah, yes," he said. "Had almost forgotten you, Mr.—Mr.—Cameron, wasn't it? Let me see, yes, Cameron."

He then informed me he would make me one of his secretaries, at a salary of three thousand a year, a position that called for services to himself and the corporation also.

"What we want in our young men nowadays," he continued, "is that they be wide awake. They must have ideas. I desire my people to make suggestions. Don't be afraid. You may depend upon it, I shall know how to sift and distinguish the ideas that come from my inferior officers. It is my business to be general, so to speak. The petty details must be looked to and submitted to me in various forms, so that I can mold a general policy. I haven't the least notion that one idea in twenty that you offer will be worth anything, of course not, but if there is one good in twenty, I wish to hear it; so don't let me overawe you. Remember that you are here to think every moment of the day and that your thoughts belong to me."

With this he lighted a cigarette and introduced me to his principal subordinate in another department, the vice-president, and, as the saying is, the brains of the management, but by no means a rich shareholder. This person was a type of the cold-blooded executives whom it is the fashion for millionaire owners to put in charge of large concerns. Such servants receive tolerable salaries, which they are expected to multiply infinitely in dividends. Compelled to make profits or lose their positions, these men become little less than ruthless, for where, had they themselves owned the properties, they might have been merciful to labourers, creditors or honest rivals, they know that they can indulge no such tenderness and be forgiven by directors. Such man-

agers, it is soon decided, are not practical men, not first-class business men.

It required only a glance for this vice-president to see that I was not a whit more experienced than the president. With a mere monosyllable or two he informed me I should have to look largely to Mr. Bigbee for my orders, as his own department had men enough. A desk in a room next to the president's was thereupon assigned me. I was very glad indeed to be separated from the vice-president, for he had a way of looking at me, particularly at my legs, a somewhat frowning and inquiring glance, that made me feel uncomfortable, as it was plain he regarded me as wholly useless, and that he had nothing more than a little curiosity as to what a creature like myself was good for or thought about.

Within one week I had some knowledge of what was not wanted in me, but to this day I have no idea what was. In the first place, I discovered the utmost jealousy towards me among several other young men similarly situated, all of whom regarded me as an intruder there by an influence not useful to themselves, for among the many evils yet to be corrected in the corporate form of modern business, there is this, that the distrust between officials is like that of courtiers. Every one suspects another of seeking advancement by treachery, by secret criticism or slander. The least favour shown to one of them by the head of affairs creates a cabal among his fellows, and let one be wrongfully accused by his superiors, the others are afraid or unwilling to assist him with the truth.

CHAPTER LXVI

I MAKE MYSELF USEFUL

DURING my stay in this business my employers found it expedient to create several new corporations, in which, qualified through a single share of stock, I was in each case made a temporary director or dummy officer. Occasionally I became a secretary or assistant secretary without the slightest authority, though always with some liability to the public or the shareholders. Nevertheless, after the custom of young men in my situation, I cheerfully voted on questions I did not understand and attested acts I never saw. Nor did I fail to share the prejudices of my superiors. When, in forming a new company, our cautious old sinners would choose a State favourable to that enterprise, I was sure to grumble, if they did, at legislation or judicial decisions. New York, I remember, was in very bad favour. New Jersey could no longer be trusted, it was feared, as one of her courts had gone so far as to intimate that a stockholder might possibly be liable for something if any creditor would expend a fortune in pursuing him. Nevada, we found, had not yet been corrupted by new-fangled reforms, no corporation or shareholder under its laws ever having been made answerable about anything. Nevada was fair.

Nothing seemed more unjust to us than the curiosity

of attorneys-general and prosecuting officers as to whether we were obeying the laws, this curiosity being, it was plain, a downright meddling in the affairs of private gentlemen. To denounce or jeer at their lawsuits had long been the practice of our officers. Indeed, many young fellows like myself had done themselves some good by cleverness on the witness stand in evading the questions of counsel for the State, at whose failures it was our habit to be very funny over our pie or chops at noon. None of the principal officers of our companies could ever be haled into court, their fevers or nervous prostrations seizing them in so timely a manner that no judge on earth could insist upon their attending.

This behaviour leaving our testimony to subordinates like myself, who knew nothing worth telling, I was rather hurt that during some time I was not thought important enough to be given a chance to perjure myself, too. However, my turn finally came.

The prosecuting officer assailing me with a rapid fire of questions on matters with which I was plainly familiar, I grew at once intelligently ignorant. The more I remembered, the more I forgot. Our counsel was pleased. I was earning promotion, though, in point of fact, I delighted in the thing for no other reason than that I honestly believed this was none of the State's business.

Losing his temper, the State's attorney leaped of a sudden from examination of the defendant company's records into that of a subsidiary concern, about which I speedily saw he knew nothing at all, so I grew very brisk in my ignorance, and the dialogue ran as follows:

Q. You are the assistant secretary of this corporation?

A. Which corporation?

Q. This one, of course. The Badville & Southern.

A. Which Badville & Southern?

Q. Which what! (derisively).

A. Yes, sir, which?

Q. Kindly abstain, Mr. Cameron, from the repetition of that word which.

A. What which?

Q. Now, sir, without appealing to the court to stop your——

Our Counsel.—Now, your Honour, we respectfully protest against any attempt at insulting or badgering this witness.

The Court.—You must treat the witness properly, Mr. Quicksands. Proceed.

Q. You hear the court, sir. Are you the assistant secretary of the Badville & Southern Railway Company?

A. I don't know.

Q. Oh, you don't know, eh?

A. No. You don't tell me which company you mean. There are two Badville & Southern companies.

Q. What's that? (confused).

A. Two. One under the laws of Maine and the other under the laws of New Jersey.

Q. Oh, ho! I see (gaining time).

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Very good indeed, Mr. Cameron.

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Now, sir, are you the assistant secretary?

A. How can I tell you unless you say which company you mean?

Q. Well, of either of them, sir.

A. Yes, sir, of one of them.

Q. Very good; which one?

A. I don't know.

Q. Oh, you don't know?

A. No, sir.

Q. Why, pray, Mr. Cameron?

A. Because they're so much alike I can't tell them apart. (Merriment in court.)

Q. Now, sir, is that all? (angrily).

A. No, sir.

Q. As a matter of fact, now, are they not utterly distinct and severally responsible concerns?

A. Why, sir, you see, the Maine company owns all the stock of the New Jersey company.

Q. Proceed.

A. But the New Jersey company has lent the Maine company five million dollars and taken the Maine company's stock as collateral. (More laughter.)

Q. Proceed.

A. Then both companies have deposited their stocks with voting trustees, who have issued certificates of trust, and all the directors have filed resignations, which are suspended for the present.

Q. Oh, very good, but the corporate organizations are kept distinct?

A. Distinct? Why, we have to have our lawyers every day to tell us which is which. (Merriment ordered suppressed by the court.)

Q. But you hold separate meetings, sir?

A. How can we? Both companies are in the hands of receivers. As I understand it, the Federal courts in Maine are enjoining the stockholders from suits in New

Jersey and the voting trustees have seized the books of both corporations. (Merriment again.)

Q. (Very red in the face). Now, your Honour, I protest against the manner of this witness.

The Court.—No matter, Mr. Quicksands, this examination must stop for another reason. The court recalls, as the witness states, that the Badville & Southern is in the hands of the Federal court. Its receivership must be respected from collateral inquiry.

Our Counsel.—We were just about to raise that point, your Honour.

The Court.—Have you any further questions, Mr. Quicksands?

Mr. Quicksands.—None, your Honour. We think the examination has made this witness very clear.

As there was nothing more pleasing to our own lawyer than to see the laugh turned on his opponent, I was reported by them in a very flattering way to my principals, who assured me the business interests of the country would be safe if they had more young men like me.

CHAPTER LXVII

WHY I LOST MY PLACE

SOME time after this event my president, being in conference with some important persons, called me to the room for some information, which I was able to give very promptly.

"You have a bright young man here," remarked one of the company, a prominent shareholder.

"Yes, I rather flatter myself," replied my chief, "on a little judgment in selecting these people."

This remark naturally making me dislike him all the more, I nevertheless appeared pleased with the situation. One morning he came rather late, with a headache such as we commonly perceive in gentlemen having an unusual appreciation of the drama, in which humour he complained of my not assisting him with suggestions and never having opened my mouth voluntarily. This I bore in mind the next day and made a suggestion of policy in the presence, very improperly, of some strangers. I thought I should have my head taken off at once, but it so happened I was mistaken in my idea and afforded him a pretty chance to set me right with a display of precise information on the details of the railway, besides which one of those present declared that it would be lucky if every railway had a president like this.

It is a principle of human nature that we dislike those who, with a view to do us a favor, accidentally do us an injury, and that we do not dislike those who, with a view to injure us, happen to do us a benefit. My president now thought better of me.

"By all means," said he, "speak out, no matter who is present—whenever, I mean, there seems reasonable excuse for your opinion being uttered. Don't be afraid of putting me at a disadvantage. If you haven't found out by this time that I am able to take care of myself, you're not worth your salary."

This pretty talk from an ass little older than myself, a mere puppet as I knew him to be, was sure to bring about trouble, and so it fell out. In the third week of my employment there came into the office no less a personage than Worryman, who soon called for papers in my care. When I had brought these, being requested to remain to aid in the examination of them, I heard with some concern a statement from Bigbee that the earnings of a branch line had the past month been a certain amount quite above the truth. Upon this basis some talk was had between the great men which I saw was leading to a definite action and was sure to cause trouble, as they were about to answer an important telegram.

"If you will permit me," I said, "I think, Mr. Bigbee, the amount is quite below that."

"Not at all," replied he cheerfully. "Just get the report and see for yourself."

Upon which he continued his talk as if I were not in existence. Though it would have been wiser not to expose him, I took pleasure in doing so by laying before them the report.

"This is a pretty different state of affairs," remarked Worryman, with a frown. "I'm glad this young man was so vigilant."

Bigbee, for his part, endeavoured to twist the figures, only making his real ignorance of the whole paper the more evident, until Worryman finally remarked:

"No matter, Mr. Bigbee; but, of course, data of this kind will probably receive your careful inspection."

This amounting to a reproof from so high a quarter, Worryman was no sooner out of the door than Bigbee broke forth in the anger of wounded vanity.

"What do you mean, young fellow, by meddling in this way? Who gave you authority to contradict the president of this company?"

I naturally referred to his love of suggestions from wide-awake young men, but this put him in a worse humour than ever, as he declared that, after trying to prove him in the wrong instead of setting him right in private, I was now misquoting him in an endeavour to defend myself.

"I think," he cried finally, "that this office can do without your valuable services. I don't care to have geniuses in my employment. You needn't return tomorrow."

I got my check and, leaving the office, betook myself to a large restaurant, where, as I was eating a bite or two, I noticed Maud Start and Conners, who had apparently finished a meal, about to leave the place through a hall at the other end of the room. I resolved to follow them.

It was only to the sidewalk, for there they separated, Maud taking a cab, while she left behind her all the perfumes of Araby the Blest. Conners, though he had

a drink too much, recognised me a moment later, grinning or chuckling, the scoundrel, as he saw that I was eager to talk with him.

"You're Connors now, I suppose?" said I, by way of pleasantry.

"I don't know as I ever denied my name, sir. Leastwise, I've never been passing under an assumed one," a happy retort, assuredly, in view of my behaviour at Columbus.

As serving people do not easily get over an awe of their superiors, and as he saw I was in the humour to thrash him, he let me push or lead him into the vestibule of some great building, becoming, besides, a trifle more respectful. In my heat I forgot about the danger to Lillian as I broke out:

"You damned scoundrel, you know that the will Maria Dole and Maud Start are claiming under is not the last he made."

Uneasy though he became, he made a safe reply.

"If my name, sir, is witness to any other will, not knowing as it is, I suppose them as has it will not fail to produce it. I haven't any such will, sir. Maybe, sir, you know of one? I believe it's against law to hide one, sir."

What reply could I make but to turn on my heel and leave him? The fellow, I saw, was well paid by the others for his silence. He probably knew that the paper he had signed as a witness, the one in Lillian's possession, was a will, but at the same time had probably not been permitted by my uncle to see its contents. From his point of view, accordingly, it was profitable to bleed the devisees under the earlier testament.

CHAPTER LXVIII

WHICH IS VERY SHORT

WHEN I reported to Olcott my early discharge, he agreed with me it was no great loss, adding that it were just as well should I take no other occupation for the present than that of looking to my own lawsuit. This condition, however, I was unwilling to fall into, as I was so much in need of money that I should have had to become in a degree dependent upon him until the event of the case, which might be against me; so, notwithstanding he was in ample funds at this period, I preferred to earn salary at once.

Moreover, we had at work several detectives, for whose mysterious expenses the only resource was Olcott's pocket, this item already bearing heavily enough, considering that all we appeared to get in return were wise suspicions and knowing looks. Their progress, in fact, seemed so slow that we even felt obliged to hire another set of detectives to spy upon these. As for my lawyers, they were engaged upon a contingent fee of one-fourth of my recovery, a plan that suited my purse exceedingly well, besides furnishing them apparently an inducement to exertion.

From Betty I had now several long communications, which I hastened to acknowledge in no doubtful length or warmth, for love, like friendship, is doubly sweet in

adversity. Our letters passed through Mrs. Egerton. I would assure Betty that nothing would overcome my energy in asserting my rights, and Betty would reply that there was nothing on earth that could. Then she would report the varying stages of her parents' humour toward me, as, without admitting a betrothal, she advised them with gentle firmness she would neither love, nor wed, another than me. Flowers from the Riviera would come pressed in the envelopes, lending their expiring odours to her photographs.

Thus passed several weeks that led us through the winter, during which period the Baxoms remembered me well. The Senator gave me notes of introduction to several people, who, he thought, could offer me good place, for he was not in the least disturbed by my break with Bigbee. I am sorry to say I found it harder to keep than to get employment. For instance, through some New York friends I found a place under a retired business man, who was giving his whole time to schemes of public benefit. A more honourable man than this I never knew, but such was his austerity of virtue, united with unusual pride of birth, that he appeared the coldest of men, while, in fact, he was discharging his useful tasks from an intellectual conviction of duty or from a good will towards society without capacity for emotion towards an individual. Within three weeks I felt so repelled by his coldness that I began to look about me for some occupation more congenial, when, being in Washington on another errand, I learned from Senator Baxom that he had need of me in a scheme in Virginia.

CHAPTER LXIX

THE SENATOR EMPLOYS ME

ONE likes a pleasant thief better than the most virtuous man in the world with a scornful air. I was glad to leave my New York employer for service to the Senator. As to the latter, it would be unjust to imply that he was a downright dishonest man, for, while I could not approve of many things he did, I felt he at least did nothing in violation of his conscience and that he pursued the methods which our business men, after a poor standard of morals, agreed to call fair dealing.

Of the virtuous man I left behind, the Senator, at first declaring him to be an infernal old hypocrite, remarked that that family had stolen so much it probably felt now that it could afford to be honest. This, though, he qualified by saying that perhaps it was not fair to be so hard on one who seemed to be doing good, so he would not set himself up as a judge.

"However, I will say," he concluded, "that if this country were made up of business men of that type, grass would be growing in the middle of Broadway. What a young country needs is action. We can't stop to get authority from the Bible every time we have to interpret a contract or reorganise a corporation."

Then he mused a moment and added :

"Cameron, there are plenty of Christians in this country, but you'll find mighty few of them in business."

He then explained to me that what I was to do in Virginia was to trace and purchase several lots of stock in two or three coal companies, which it was designed to amalgamate. Such a proceeding required the assent of every share, unless, by ruining the companies in bankruptcy or receivership, title could be gotten by forced sale. At first his syndicate, having a controlling interest, had so starved the properties as to reduce them from dividends to deficits, and in this way had made nearly all the outstanding shareholders capitulate at a low price. Nevertheless, there remained several who, as the Senator expressed it, were still unreasonable. These it was too expensive to cut off by judicial sales, so it was necessary to buy their shares, and this I must accomplish in a leisurely way by falling in with the owners, as it were, by chance. I must be merely a young Northern traveller, a student of Southern life, who happened to notice these mines and to take a fancy to a little stock. Accordingly, he and his friends having given me all necessary information about the companies to enable me to discuss the values intelligently, I set out to the interior of Virginia. The real value of the shares my principals pleasantly declined to tell me, saying that the poorer I thought the shares the more conscientiously I could persuade the owners to sell them for a song.

Before going to Virginia I spent a day or two in New York, where I found my lawsuit receiving as much attention as I had any right to expect from eminent counsel. The trial, it was clear, would occur in the

spring, say about May, before which time it was believed we should receive an offer of settlement from the other side. The detectives had at length been able to get some of the secrets of Maud Start, through an emissary, who had required two months to gain a little of her confidence. The hints received were not satisfactory, to be sure, but they indicated a great deal, and, what was now hoped was that these conspirators, as we deemed them, would fall to quarreling with each other over the spoils. Neither Olcott nor I was willing to accept this entirely, though we could not refrain from further hope.

A letter from Betty at this juncture depressed me much, since it became clear her life was no longer a happy one with her parents, who began to disclose a pretty firm determination to make her marry Catesby. I was quite miserable about this, bitterly regretting I had not induced her to elope with me when I had her. As it was, I sent her a cablegram of hope, wrote her a letter of endless length, and hurried to Virginia in the belief that if I accomplished this business well for the Senator, I should be put in a permanent place, where, let the worst come of my lawsuit, I could support Betty in decency. Fired with this hope, I dispatched her another letter—this from Washington—telling her to cable a reply in care of the Senator, and I would marry her at the dock if she should return to our native land.

To my pleasure I met Colonel Evanson in Washington before my departure for the South.

"I trust you've seen Miss Lily recently, Mr. Cameron," said he; "the finest girl in the world, suh, and the loveliest."

I assured him I had.

"Both my sons being gone, she's the greatest comfort in the world. Yes, suh, the greatest; a letter from her nearly every day, in spite of all that professional work and worry. She had to leave us pretty young, but, suh, such a daughter!"

"Let us quietly drink her dear health, Colonel, in the family, so to speak," I replied, and we very respectfully (the old man almost reverently) did so at a quiet table in a neighbouring restaurant.

"Both the boys, you understand, suh," he remarked, "went to the West. There's a diminishing future in the South; our bright lads run up North or out West. They're silently getting away from this nigger problem or nigger civilisation. The time's coming, suh, when nigger belles and beaux will have a society column in the newspapers, their own or ours, and take trips to Europe—not soon, you know, but some day, and I don't know, suh, any white man in the North would like to live under those conditions when just exactly every second face you meet is black."

"I suppose we don't notice this thing yet in so large a place as New York," I remarked.

"Of course not," continued he. "But the greater part, suh, of any country is its small towns and villages. Now, suh, suppose you lived in a town of ten thousand people and the richest man in it was a nigger and a banker, too. How'd you like to borrow? Every gentleman has to borrow, of course. Or, suppose you weren't a gentleman, suh, and only kept a store. How'd you like to borrow from a nigger?"

"Now, suh," he went on, "I know you'd feel like killing the nigger, of course, but I hardly think myself we'd be justified in killing him for being a banker—not

exactly. The fact is, I don't feel unkindly, Mr. Cameron, towards those poor creatures. None of us do. Why, suh, I risked my life once to save a nigger's, and would do it again, in a minute, suh. I'm glad you're going down there on this little trip, Mr. Cameron. I'm going down to Richmond myself. Keep you company, suh. There's a great question of existence to be settled there, suh. Some very fine people are simply drifting North or West."

As I left him he smiled and said :

"Miss Lily assures me, suh, you've been a great comfort to her in many ways. An old man is at your service, Mr. Cameron, a little old, but mighty willing, I assure you."

I thanked him cordially.

"A world of temptation to set a girl down in, that life up there in New York, but, suh, she doesn't even know it's there. Just like a baby, Mr. Cameron! Ah, she's her mother's girl!"

At this the old man silently raised his glass in toast to the wife that was.

"I suppose I'm an old fool, Mr. Cameron, to be talking this way. I trust other gentlemen have dutiful daughters. As to her acting, fortunately, suh, the world has settled that question for me, so I'm permitted to be proud. Yes, suh, they tell me Miss Lily's the greatest actress that ever spoke the English language. It's not for me to say, Mr. Cameron, not for me to say."

CHAPTER LXX

COLONEL EVANSON'S VIEWS

THE white men of our Southern States constitute a part of our race unsurpassed in personal courage, the women, the fairest of their sex. To the courage of the former are added honesty and love of truth; to the beauty of the latter, chastity, loyalty and sweetness of temper. These virtues are most of them old enough among that people, but the melancholy reverses of war have made them, during a generation not yet passed away, clearer by adversity. That these people greatly resemble the Irish is too plain to escape observation. Here we find a Celtic indifference to money, a willingness to stake everything on sentiment, a cheerful humour in poverty.

More terrible than devastating armies is that silent conflict of races now begun in those fair States. This conflict, so little understood elsewhere, must suffer its true principle to be revealed before justice can be done the Southern people by those of us who dwell in the magnificent Commonwealths of the North.

In this momentous question there are two errors into which we are very willing to fall—one, that the negroes have been reasonable enough to die so rapidly that they have not gained in numbers upon the Southern whites; the other, that the trouble will gradually cure itself by the education and even the opulence of the negroes.

Both suppositions are grossly wrong. The negroes have gained prodigiously in numbers, and, let them become educated or opulent, the white man's position becomes utterly intolerable.

During our ride to Richmond I often made observations to the Colonel on the negroes, whose habitations, squalid enough, could frequently be seen from the train, but his replies were commonly monosyllables, a circumstance at which I wondered a little, since the good gentleman was generally communicative. It being evening when we arrived, and neither of us being able to perform our errands until the next day, we passed several hours in walking and driving in the streets and over the hills of this very pleasant city. Swarms of blacks in various degrees of poverty or thrift crowded the streets.

"The negroes are exceedingly numerous, Colonel."

"Yes, suh, yes, suh."

"Are they as common in the Carolinas?"

"Yes, suh."

"Every other face you meet there is black?"

"Thick as flies, suh."

"It seems strange, Colonel, when one stops to think of it, that there should be such a multitude of these people, apparently as many as the whites, when the importation of them was stopped nearly a century ago. They must breed like rabbits."

"You're thinking a little, suh, I see," replied the Colonel, "but, bless your soul, suh, I've just been keeping quiet. I don't like to press my views in a sectional question on a visiting gentleman from the North. It's not altogether hospitable, Mr. Cameron."

I assured him nothing could be taken amiss by me

on a subject in which I felt as impartial as any man on earth.

"Mr. Cameron, suh," said he, as we drove along, "the multiplication of the niggers is appalling. People talk about their rapid death rate. Yes, suh, but their birth rate is so much greater than ours that the black rascals more than make up the difference. I'm not much of a hand at statistics, suh, but I just thought I'd look at the figures in a cyclopædia or two—some tables from the Government's official census—Northern work, suh, every bit of it, I reckon. Now, suh, I find that the nigger is about as great a fraction of the total population of these United States to-day as he was forty years ago."

"Well, then, he's not gaining," I remarked, rather stupidly, as it resulted.

"Yes, suh. You've missed it, pardon me, just as every one else does. He's gaining."

"But how, on those figures?"

Mr. Cameron, in the last forty years how many millions of immigration have the white people had from Europe?"

"Ah, I see, Colonel."

"Yes, suh, millions, and first-class breeders, too. About fifteen millions, suh."

I fell to thinking, and the Colonel proceeded:

"Why, Mr. Cameron, if it hadn't been for that immigration, suh, the nigger would have jumped from a ninth to a sixth or a seventh. Remember, suh, these immigrants have been great breeders, so you have not only them but their descendents in the present population. Now, suh, just imagine what would be the record if we'd never had them."

"And in the South you've not had any of the immigration?"

"No, suh," he answered sadly. "There's the fate of the South, its fate, suh, its doom. We've had no immigration. We've suffered the entire nigger gain."

"Why don't you encourage immigration?"

"Useless, Mr. Cameron. White labour won't come here, suh. Useless."

"But, Colonel, the great intellectual superiority of your people——"

"Pardon me, suh, I understand. Yes, suh, for a long time we'll control, suh; we'll have the business and political management of affairs. But that can't last always, suh. There must come a time when these black people are going to have wealth and some of them intellect. Some of our people won't listen to the possibility of intellect in a nigger, but it'll come by degrees, suh, along with property."

"Well, then, you have a good condition of things——orderly population and——"

"Ah, you never catch the point, you Northerners. Mr. Cameron, you've been to the Pacific Coast, I believe. Now, suh, you've seen those Chinese and some Japanese—a mighty shrewd lot, I believe. How'd you like to live in a town that was one-half Chinese, and the Chinese doing one-half the banking, keeping one-half the shops, running one-half the hotels, yes, suh, and filling one-half the city's offices? How'd you like a Chinese mayor? Why, suh, after concluding that the thing was inevitable, after seeing that their numbers and wealth have rights, you'd pack your trunk, suh, and leave that town. Of course you would, if you had ladies in your family. There'd be Chinese police-

men. Maybe the principal theatre would be run by a Chinaman. Would you take ladies there?"

"Why not two theatres, two restaurants, and the like, one for each race?"

"Impracticable, Mr. Cameron. A city doesn't progress that has to divide things that way. Let's see, suh. All the whites would patronize one bank, all the niggers another. Each side intrigues to help its own colour. Trade jealousies would be terrible. But, suh, over all is this: You wouldn't think you had dignity as a white man in a town that had for its principal banker or merchant or for its mayor a Chinaman backed by thousands of aggressive Chinamen. No, suh, you'd leave that town. You wouldn't reason much. You'd just feel uncomfortable and get out."

"Then the negro's advance in wealth or elegance——"

"Is, suh, the intolerable part of it. I don't know, suh, what the abstract right or wrong of this thing is, but I simply say, Mr. Cameron, no white man, North or South, would be a contented person where one-half the people in his town were niggers, wore fine clothes, or filled half the seats in a theatre. You can't reason about these things. No, suh, let two rich niggers rent houses on Fifth Avenue or Beacon Street on either side of any Northern gentleman on earth, and he sells his house in twenty-four hours. If a Southern man, he'd say, 'These damned niggers are growing too thick here for me.' If a Northern man, 'Somehow, I don't like this neighbourhood any more.'"

"But is the negro gain so great?"

"About the time of George Washington's death, suh, we whites were three to one. Now we're only a half.

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In some States we're outnumbered; yes, outnumbered. Now, suh, whatever immigration there's been has been white. You can judge for yourself as to niggers' breeding."

"But what's the end of it all?"

The Colonel was silent.

"Mr. Cameron," said he, "we Southerners don't generally admit it, but ultimately this is a black man's region. We'll rule 'em with an iron hand, finally get tired out of it, and retire before the black tide instead of trying to sweep it back with a broom."

"People here don't commonly talk in this way?"

"No, suh, it's hard on our pride and bad for property, but I tell you, Mr. Cameron, it's in every Southern breast. We're thinking a heap, suh. It makes us hard to understand."

"And what——"

"Damn me, Mr. Cameron, I can't discuss this thing any more. No suh, pardon me, it's a gloomy picture, gloomy picture."

He was silent for a time, during which he puffed at his cigar impatiently. Then he concluded:

"Mr. Cameron, suppose you were a successful young lawyer in a medium-sized Southern city, or suppose you were a prosperous merchant there, suh, and visiting capitalists coming from the North or England wished to make a large investment in street railways, gas concerns or the like, and suppose they finding that a rich nigger, full of ability, had lots of influence, they consulted him and passed you by or had little to say to you. Would you like that town any more, suh? Would you feel you had any real dignity or your town dignity, either? Now, suh, to express it in a nutshell, our

bright young men are seeing this. They are leaving us, suh, gradually, silently, not because the nigger has got yet to this position, but because, first, the big nigger population is a dead weight until it is rich and educated, and second, because, after it is rich and educated, it takes all the dignity and half the influence away from the white man. It's irreconcilable, this friction, Mr. Cameron. It's in our race and yours. There's no logic about it."

Put together the States of Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina and Florida, and you will discover that the negroes are a majority already of all the population. Is not one hundred years a fair test? Take any decade in their history and see the increase of negroes. Here is a region larger than France. In this region the two races have been left to themselves. Whatever contributions of population have come from the outside have come to the whites, not to the blacks in any degree worth mentioning.

But what is to be the result? *The whites will disappear.* Their birth rate under the influence of adverse conditions will decline. Gradually they will abandon the soil. This is the singular, the extraordinary solution of that strange problem. What! it is cried, he who prophesies this knows nothing of the Southern spirit. Never will the white man yield to the black!

That the whites have the spirit to dominate, and the courage to rule or die, is plain to the most casual observer of that fine people. Such domination must, however, be maintained by force. The force required to maintain it must, in turn, be greater as the numbers

to be dominated either increase, or, by reason of education itself, more generally aspire.

At last the white man will weary of a strife in which, while he has the undoubted courage to prevail, he perceives the futility of contention. The rival race breeds unceasingly. No relief comes by immigration, or if any comes, it may be from races that are willing to marry the blacks and thus increase them. In other regions within our own country the white man with his children may have peace.

At first only a few will retreat, but, as each lessening makes the position of the remainder less hopeful, the stream will gain in volume. Then will the North and West prescribe to the blacks the boundaries of settlement, and by unwritten law a certain parallel of latitude must not be passed. Then will be arrested by the anxious North that black tide, which already has crossed the Ohio, which has crept toward Columbus, and which has discoloured the whole southern portions of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois.

Extraordinary result! Hateful, intolerable consequence! No Southern man will openly admit so sad a thing. No Southern editor, no leader of expression or opinion among that high-spirited race, our noble brothers in so much adversity, will yet admit what often in the depth of his heart he feels is the sad end of it all. Every acre of land and every piece of property in the South must decline in value should such a possibility be conceded. It will be scouted now, but another age will see the inevitable change.

Where now are the whites of salubrious Jamaica or of Haiti and the other West Indies? Already the desertion of the South by white men has begun, though

in streams as yet too small to be noticed. You may see it in the West, in some of the Middle States, and on the Pacific Coast. The genial climate, the more genial manners of the South, are left behind by thoughtful men, who do not hesitate in sadness to admit how vain they found it to contend with that black tide. On the other hand, there has begun also the resistance of the other States to the black invasion. The line is becoming perceptible. Along railways you may see it in Southern Illinois and in Texas, at small towns, where the emigrant negro family is warned to move on, and where, if they disregard the simple placard, a summary voice accosts them. These things, not yet much observed, are the beginning of territorial division.

Of all the migrations in history, is there another so wonderful as the migration, the involuntary migration, of the children of Ham? Dragged from the tropics to the temperate zone, from the Southern to the Northern Hemisphere and to another continent across the sea, they breed in the bosom of their Caucasian captors eleven millions of Africans! In the next age shall there exist a black republic between the Ohio and the Gulf? In some remoter era shall a multitude beneath the Capitol behold a black Chief Justice administering the mighty oath to a black President of all the Union?

Shall the North behold in exile the daughters of the South? I see, I see a later generation, in which only one question, only one thought, animates the mind of the nation, and in which, while a mighty people hang upon his utterance, some modern Demosthenes gives life again to the impassioned voice that thundered beneath the acropolis (if I may imitate that glorious invocation): "By those who shed their blood on Bunker

Hill, by those who sank with flying colours on Lake Champlain, by those who fell under both flags at Gettysburg, by all you other souls that sleep in the cemeteries of the nation, dear heroes, it must not, shall not be!"

CHAPTER LXXI

BETTY'S RETURN

RETURNING from Virginia in tolerable luck, I had no sooner arrived in town when I found a message from Betty announcing the abrupt return of herself and the family, a change of plan occasioned, no doubt, by the approaching war with Spain, when all our business men found it prudent to watch the markets at home. After some deliberation I resolved to meet her steamer, now due, as the message was several days old when received, but not without misgivings as to the reception I should get from her parents.

At last the sweet Betty came down the bridge. We hailed each other eagerly a hundred times in advance, though the mother's frown seemed to darken the very air. The father was not at their side, for he was busy with luggage and friends, but, to my disgust, at the heels of my beloved trailed the insipid, supercilious Catesby.

In so public a place, being unable to bestow on Betty a hearty caress, I was trying to be civil to the mother and Catesby, when the latter, with marked rudeness, not only failed to return my bow, but, wedging himself between Betty and me and turning his back in my very face, began to lead her off. It was a marked insult.

"You infernal puppy," I cried. "Get out of here, or I'll beat you; do you hear, I'll beat you!"

With that, catching Catesby by the arm, which I must have twisted badly, I nearly flung him on a heap of bags and parcels, and created, as was natural, a small commotion. The mother was furious.

"You miserable fellow!" she exclaimed to me; and then to Betty: "Get into the carriage quickly. This boor of yours will have us all in the police station."

"You sha'n't talk that way, mother," cried Betty. "Mr. Cameron was insulted, grossly insulted. Come, Charles, get us a hansom. That's good enough for me. Take me home yourself."

Even the mother stood back before the angry eyes of the girl as we told our driver to be off.

"I never have been so ashamed of myself in my life," I said. "What a fool, to lose my temper so. I hope I didn't hurt him."

Betty, leaning very close to me, whispered:

"I hope you did."

We laughed at this, and then she added:

"That man is a horror to me. You know, he must have spies on you. The fellow has been telling mother and father that you are seen a great deal with Lillian Evanson."

The sisterly tenderness of Lillian, with two or three little kisses, so innocently intended, dear reader, recurred to my mind most uneasily.

"Why, the scoundrel!" I exclaimed. "How could he—why, Betty, you know—to be sure, I have visited Miss Evanson—but on business, Betty. You understand. My uncle's affairs were so strangely intermingled. I'll whip that fellow Catesby yet. I am sure, Betty, you didn't——"

"Believe it?" answered the little woman, proudly.

"Never! I saw through his scheme in a moment. What I wondered at was why he didn't have more sense and make out a story, or revive one, about that horrible Trixy Gordon."

Again I felt uneasy, as I reflected on the power of the latter lady to make me tender.

"Trixy tried me sorely, Betty."

"You were brave, after all, about that," she replied.

"Betty," I added, with sweet hypocrisy, "a man can trust you so!"

"Thank you, dear," she replied. "Do you know, Charles, I couldn't tolerate those titled adventurers abroad. You can't believe a word they utter, can't trust them behind your back a second. Give *me* one of our true American men."

If you are a married man you will agree that this Betty of mine was a jewel; that she had all those reasonable qualities that make a man happy. You will also agree that it is better to leave some things untold and to look fidelity when you might betray repentance

The best part of man is hypocrisy, and there are few virtues so useful as those that are pretended.

Thus we rode on, discussing my bad business condition. To marry on my present little income was out of the question. My lawyers, however, would soon decide whether I could legally, by withdrawing my contest of the will, regain my right to accept the seventy-five thousand. With that I could start, and Betty be my partner in life.

"I'm not afraid to be poor," said the ingenuous girl, who had not the slightest conception of what poverty meant. "I can get on with two or three servants. I'll begin this minute to save my pin money."

I longed to tell her of that second will, but it was out of the question, so we assumed that at most I could have only seventy-five thousand in all those millions—and perhaps nothing at all.

CHAPTER LXXII

SOME DISAGREEABLE THINGS

WITHIN two days Senator Baxom sent for me in some haste and I found him finishing luncheon with Senator Gway. This statesman I knew only from photographs or cartoons, hence I was pleased to recognise so great a man with all his vices rotting in his face.

War with Spain, they informed me, after Baxom had introduced me to Gway as the very discreet young fellow they had in mind, was inevitable, together with a consequent effect on stocks of all kinds. Some would fall greatly, others would rise exceedingly high. Among such as would fall were reckoned mining shares, hence it became necessary for the two Senators to protect their interests, as they termed it, by buying these shares indirectly from numerous holders, who, having borrowed to buy them, might find their loans demanded in the fretful money market, these holders being, I perceived, many simple-minded persons who, in making their investment, had been in no small degree influenced by the splendid names of Baxom and Gway.

Both Senators deplored war in general, but believed this one would be a good thing for the nation. Our arms had long lain inert. The letting of a little blood

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was needed now. A whole generation had grown without so much as a glimpse of carnage and manœuvres and hospital trains. The nation would rise as one man to avenge our honour in the sunken *Maine*. Business would be fine.

It was accordingly arranged that I should go to Colorado at once under an assumed name to buy these scattered shares. Before doing so I returned to New York to see Betty. This it was now easy to do, either at the Oldworths or, better still, at the Olcotts, where the most agreeable friendship had sprung up between the two young women, a friendship very natural, indeed, when we consider that they were parties to the most tender of all conspiracies. Bad luck attended me in one thing. Old Sinclair, happening to enter the train at Philadelphia, espied me in my seat and most caustically addressed himself to me.

"Mr. Cameron," he said, with none of his usual cant of manner, "your behaviour at the dock the other morning was so scandalous that I believe I may be exceedingly plain with you, indeed."

"Thank you, Mr. Sinclair," I replied, with a pleasant smile, determined he should not have the satisfaction of wounding me. "Pray, don't trouble yourself with candour, though. I think I understand things exactly."

"Not quite, young fellow," he retorted testily. "There's one thing I have left unsaid. If you marry Betty I'll disinherit her. Not one cent of my money shall ever get into your hands."

"I think we can get on without it, thank you," I replied.

"Very good, sir," he continued. "You talk, I sup-

pose, about your undying love for her, and so forth, but I shall have my opinion of a young man who deliberately induces a girl to throw away every dollar of her inheritance."

Giving me no time for a reply, he left me with a look that boded no good to Betty, to whom I speedily related what had occurred. That he might do this she feared, as his temper was inflexible, nor were my feelings at all comfortable, when, having an experience of my own, I reflected on the injustice it would do her to cause her the loss of all her patrimony.

"It isn't this money matter, though, that troubles me," remarked Betty. "That I am ready to lose. The real trouble is, Charles, I must not marry against the wishes of both my parents. We must bring them to our side. Think how good they have been to me, and they mean me no harm. Now, don't worry. I don't mean that I shall marry to please them, only that I don't wish, if I can help it, to marry to *displease* them."

I now consulted my lawyers to see whether I could legally claim the seventy-five thousand dollars under the Albany will, upon which they assured me my having filed a contest was an irrevocable breach of the condition, and that all I could hope for now was to get a compromise. This last was intolerable to me. I would ask nothing by way of concession from such a gang of thieves. Could we have the trial soon? I would fight to the end. My heart sank to hear of the fourth postponement of the hearing, but I comforted myself with their looks of success. Both my counsel now appeared more sanguine. The case looked better. Courts were less disposed now than ever to let a dying man do as he pleased with his estate. There were new decisions

hot from the bench. The trend, both of public opinion and of judicial decree, was against testators. Wills were none of their business. Indeed, it might even be said now that the existence of a will raised a presumption of fraud.

The trial was set for September, and I sent Betty a warm letter of prediction, which it needed only her loving heart to resolve into certainty. Then I returned to Washington, saw the Senators, and was dispatched *incognito* to Denver.

I had already an opportunity to see what class of men our country is able to get for its service, and, while I saw some good men of talent, I was disappointed indeed at the whole, nor could I fail to arrive at some conclusion as to the cause of so singular a consequence, which reflections, dear reader, are to be yours now as well as mine.

Of all the nations in history ours is the first in which it has not been esteemed an honour by all citizens to be in the public service. The vital blood of government consists in the emulation of every class to serve the state. In such a condition some aspire from greed, but all from pride. Thus it was in cultured Athens, in military Rome, in commercial Venice. Thus it is to-day in Germany, France, and England, the richest merchants of which vie with their scholars and their haughtiest barons in the noblest of aspirations, the desire to govern. Woe to the country that beholds this spirit dying among its people! For the loss of this no growth of population, no increase of wealth, can possibly compensate. They who have shown themselves the most capable in private employments must be led to public place. Where honour cannot entice them, re-

ward, pecuniary reward, must induce them to aspire, for their talents must be had at any price and the state must procure both their dignity and their capacity. Let not theorists upon government disdain to recall them by mere money, or say that the services which only salary can obtain are to be despised. Riches have been long a measure of ability among us, and in a land where money is so respected as to keep talent in private profit, public place will itself become respected by splendour of emolument.

All the ills that now torment our country, the rotten governments of a hundred cities, the poorly made laws, the poorer enforcement of all the laws, the spread of tolerated crime, all can be traced to that wretched frugality of democracy which, during three generations, has refused to proportion in a reasonable degree the rewards of office to the profits of business, which has degraded public place to a seat of poverty in a land of riches, and which has rendered politics contemptible by leaving it profitable only to the bad. In vain is talent chided to serve the nation. It refuses the unfair call. It refuses an old age of poverty. It refuses poverty when universal opinion, long prevailing, withholds from the poor servants of the government the compensation of being envied for their places by those who are distinguished in private success.

CHAPTER LXXIII

I GO TO DENVER

HARDLY had I taken the train for Chicago and Denver when I was accosted by one Gregory, a former acquaintance in New York, and a lively lad, who, though he had never suffered reverses of fortune, was able to feel considerable sympathy with me. We repaired to the buffet car, where he informed me he was bound for Chicago and was unusually thirsty. He then introduced me to some Pittsburgers, who, having been made nervous by a rumour that Congress would reduce the tariff on steel a fraction of one per cent., were also resorting to stimulants. These fattened swine of statute, notwithstanding they were wallowing in profits, complained bitterly of that spread of anarchy which grumbled at their selling iron six thousand miles from the United States more cheaply than at home, nothing being more capable of just explanation if other people could only see it as clearly as themselves.

Being fresh from a circle in which their prejudices were shared, I assured them the nation would not be so unreasonable as to interfere with their profits; that, in fact, I had friends who would not permit the people to do so, a prediction that found great favour and caused my millionaire acquaintances to say that I need mention no names, as they understood me exactly, the

maligned commercial interests of the country being, thank God, not without a friend or two still. They then spoke of Senators Baxom and Gway as bulwarks of national credit. The ingratitude of the labouring classes was next commented on.

"I have continually raised the wages of my men," said one. "Never have I failed to respond to their demands. It is a sacrifice cheerfully made. I am a mere steward in the management of my own properties. I am willing to stand any loss in that respect."

With this he called for champagne.

"People, I know," he continued, "grumble at the advanced price of steel. Mr. Cameron, you must in your situation be prepared to answer such unjust complaints. How can it be otherwise? Is it possible to manufacture as cheaply now as heretofore? Look at the cost of labour in this country. If we have advanced the price of steel, God knows it is only because we have had to pay more to our men. If the people of this country want high-priced labour, let them pay for it."

Finding I was bound for Denver, each gave me his card, on which was scribbled the name of some friend in that city who could be of service to me, and I was sorry to leave them behind at Pittsburg. At Chicago I left, also, Gregory, who had proved an unusually good fellow.

About a day later, arriving in Denver, I assumed the name of Edward Costello of Philadelphia, sought a modest hotel, and began to look to my business. The very next day, though, whom should I stumble upon but Gregory.

"Hello, Cameron," he cried. "I was in hopes of finding you."

"Not so fast, Gregory," I replied. "In Denver I am Edward Costello."

"Good enough!" said he. "You might have picked a worse name; but what's the cause?"

"That I can't tell you, as it is other people's business, but secrecy is the word. Now, what are you doing here?"

"A short story," he answered. "I caught the word in Chicago that there is something going to happen in Bumble Bee stock. If you see any, buy it or send it to me, but don't talk."

For this act of confidence I thanked him cordially, making, however, very little importance of it, since I had things of my own concern to do before I could renew my plans with Betty.

That night I got a telegram from the Senator requesting that I go at once to Congor City, about a hundred miles away, to see a certain Colonel Jones, who would have information for me, and my astonishment was complete when, on my meeting that person, I received through him a letter from the Senator, written the day I left Washington, and explaining to me an entirely different errand from what he had talked of in that city. The cunning old fellow had determined not to let me into the secret until I was past the possibility of talking on the way, and it was not mining stock I was to get, but deeds to sundry coal lands. Drafts in my name as Edward Costello were enclosed. All I had to do was to see that half a dozen people sign conveyances to a corporation that I pay into their hands the proper amounts, and come home.

CHAPTER LXXIV

I RETURN TO WASHINGTON

THIS task I saw I could discharge in a few days, for I had little else to do than to find or wait for the vendors, none of whom were reluctant to sell. While I was thus idly employed I became acquainted with many plain people in the country hotel, among whom was a silent but pleasant-looking miner. He was one of that class known as prospectors, who, as they bear the hardships of the mountains, are the most honest, and commonly the least successful, of those who have to do with mines. No class of men being more prone to sudden friendships as well as sudden suspicions, luck caused it to happen that this man, Canby, took a fancy to me. On the second day, having loitered a good deal with me, he at length took me into his confidence concerning a claim on which he was at work. This sort of talk, of course, would have attracted only a moment's notice from one more experienced in mines than myself, inasmuch as not one discovery in a thousand is anything better than a ticket in a lottery, but to me, who had never seen one of these will-o'-the-wisps, the discovery of any gold meant a great deal. With increasing interest I listened to dips, spurs, country rock, horses, faults, and the like, until I fancied I saw quite clearly the reasons why other people had not avoided mistakes

in mines. Then were recounted the famous mines of the past generation, the Comstock lode and the Silver King. The Dolly was to be another such.

Canby had the enthusiasm of his own belief, which quickly inspired me to risk three hundred dollars for a quarter interest, and for that I got from him his deed at once, the fellow honestly applying the money in provision for further work. He contributed three hundred dollars himself for other supplies, bade me good-bye on the third day, and returned to his hole in the hills.

For my own part, I began the next day to regret my little investment, for I soon heard enough of mining to perceive that these ventures are the common sink of money, everybody in a mining region being the owner of several claims. However, there was nothing to do but to forget it, so, applying myself to my real undertaking, I was able on the fifth day to conclude it and return to Washington.

Here I found on my arrival at midnight only poor reports from the detectives, dubious lines from my lawyers, and, by some mischance, not a letter from Betty. Disgusted, I sauntered to an oyster-house for a bite before sleep. Just as I was swallowing my last mouthful there bounded in a number of chorus girls, one of whom, thoughtlessly dropping into a chair at my small table, utterly crushed my hat. She sought to restore it, with honest apologies.

"My name's Lottie—Lottie Lingerie, some of the boys call me. McGovern's my real name. I'll pay for this."

"Not on your life, Miss Lingerie!" I cried. "I'm

in bad luck now, and, just to break the run of ill luck, here's my last ten dollars for you girls to drink my health with after I go."

"Well, you are a sport!" quoth the fairy. "My father lost all his fortune once. He was in the grocery business. Fifteen hundred dollars! It was terrible. What's your name?"

"Cameron," I replied, as I rose to leave her.

"No relation to that old Cameron that the papers talk so much about, that used to run after Lillian Evan-son and left such a lawsuit?"

"Oh, a sort of relative," said I. "Good-night, Lottie."

"Well, if you are," she continued, "there's a sharp named Sanderson connected with that thing, that's no good. We all hate him. He used to hang around in New York before we went on the road. He's in Florida now with one of our girls, hiding there with her, crazy about her, you know, and thrown over some woman that's trying to find him. Good-night. Say, girls, here's the wine for everybody."

The importance of this hint grew on me, and at two o'clock in the morning I telegraphed to my detectives to send one of their men to me at once. Nothing, they had assured me, was more important than a quarrel between some of the conspirators. Maud Start, known to be infatuated with Sanderson, would, it was hoped, have cause for jealousy, the most vindictive of human passions, but thus far no cause for it had apparently been given her.

By the next night one of those wise-looking sleuth-hounds arrived from New York, got all the clues I

could give him, had taken his own way of following them up, and was able to inform me he had gotten the exact address, as well as the assumed name, of Sanderson in Florida.

CHAPTER LXXV

MY LAWSUIT

I HAD scarcely gotten back to Washington before war was declared, or was begun, against Spain. The nation was in arms, the Capital filled with military men, contractors, and lobbyists.

Then were seen those gallant musters of our forces. Unused to martial scenes, our population exulted in this display of unconquerable youth. The mobilisation, the parades, the camps were accounted worthy of a great people aroused to victory. In this spirit every movement of our troops was proclaimed an act of strategy or of daring. The rest of the world having no recent feats of war to judge it by, was also pleased, for the world had yet to behold the legions of Japan. Renown attended the exploits of our navy. Its vigilance, its courage, and its final success were received with unbounded acclaim until that morning in May when the newsboys around the world were crying the final triumph of Japan, and mankind were crying the final triumph of Japan, and mankind would listen to nothing but the name of Togo, would listen to nothing but the glory of Togo, the master of the seas.

The Senator glowed with love of country and new schemes, a lobby revolving around him in which was

hatched every day a new kind of profit. As for me, not a moment of leisure was allowed, willing as I was, besides, to participate in so much excitement.

But the detectives, as usual, were thrown off the scent of Sanderson, whom, after tracing him with the girl to Florida, they lost track of, but accomplishing at least this, that they were able, through anonymous letters, to send Maud Start a circumstantial account of his infidelity. This, it was predicted, would bear good fruit. Justice might result from the rage of woman scorned.

This being, as you may imagine, a period of provoking suspense, I could come to no plan as to my marrying. All my hopes were set on the schemes of the Senator, since nothing in my lawsuit gave me reasonable expectation, nor was any thought more exasperating than that, if I could induce the dear Betty to wed, it could only be at the expense of her own fortune in exchange for the woeful hazard of mine.

Meanwhile I had to endure the expense of litigation, not, indeed, of the contingent counsel fees, but of obtaining testimony, a burden most grievous, as Olcott just at this juncture, after the most generous loans to me, found a pinch in his affairs. It was plain I should have to capitulate if these delays were prolonged. There was only one advantage I had: the other side, on account of my contest, were denied the money during the litigation, and, could I have humbled myself to seek a compromise with such thieves, I might have gotten something at once. As it was, I might hope to have them dissolve amid necessity and cupidity.

Betty cheered me with many letters to Washington between my visits to New York, together with pretty photographs of her in such poses, garb and situations

as were invented by the amateur mind of Mary Olcott, sweet little pictures indeed, in which she looked as daintily buxom as any dimpled maid in the gardens of Hokusai.

Playfully sanguine, she would write one letter in a square, another in a circle like a round-robin, a third with a sketch of the great mansion we should occupy (for she could draw with some skill), a fourth with a doleful outline of a cabin we should have to accept in our last extremities. Then, assuming we were already married, she would say: "We're down to two servants now, Charles," or "I'm discharging my last maid to-day."

Often, as was natural, I thought of that will in Lillian's hands, a few sheets of paper that could open so easily treasures like those of Aladdin. But I would not dwell on that. Every man in America would despise me, I was sure, for riches so obtained, so I sent a peremptory reply in the negative to this note that came from Lillian during that gloomy period:

"Don't worry. My mind is made up. If the suit goes against you, I'll produce that thing at once. I'll renounce that horrible sum that was to go to me, so maybe the public will soften a little, and the blow not be so hard. Don't worry."

CHAPTER LXXVI

CONCERNING THE PHILIPPINES

THE trial of my lawsuit was to occur just three weeks hence. Until then I could think of nothing else than winning it, though remaining in Washington as the Senator's private secretary. To me was left the revision of his speeches, the collection of the data showing his industry and practical research, and the careful reading of newspapers that criticised either him or his friends.

In this way I saw much of the President, over whom, it was plain, the Senator had great influence. The head of the nation was a kindly man, easily to be led about by strong minds, provided they appeared to represent the popular turn, of which, for he was a timorous politician, he was ever solicitous.

One day the Senator came to me as if in much secrecy, it being his habit to talk with me even when he really cared little for my opinion and had his own notions made up.

"Cameron," he whispered, "what do you think of this Philippine business?"

"As to our keeping the islands, you mean?"

"Yes," he replied. "Do you think we can make any money out of them? Even you young fellows have ideas sometimes on these things. How does this new-

fangled sort of empire strike you? What do the papers say?"

"Upon my word, Senator," said I, "this affair of Dewey's has raised a new problem. The country seems a little inclined to keep the islands, though."

"I think so, yes, I fancy so," said he. "Some of our friends are seeing to it that the press steers public opinion a little. The public have to be guided sometimes, you know."

I now saw that the old statesman had, as the saying is, an axe to grind, that he was resolved on our keeping the islands, and that in a short time I should hear of something pretty.

"The President," I remarked, "when I saw him yesterday for you on that naval bill, dropped a remark that inclines me to believe him opposed to our retaining the Philippines."

"What's that?" responded he. "Why, the last time I talked to the old—but no matter. The President, as you know, sometimes changes his mind. On this Philippine question he has no fixed opinions. He doesn't really think what you say. He merely *thinks* that he thinks it."

Musing a moment, he added :

"Suppose to-day you see him for me on that pork and beef contract, just to hand him these memoranda, and contrive to refer to this Philippine question again. Then suppose you drop a hint that the people everywhere begin to feel our national interests demand the islands, and so forth. Just at present I don't care to push my ideas on him; other matters are pending, you see."

This I promised to do, upon which he launched into

the advantages of our trade with the islands, and, above all things, our duty to mankind. At the latter he winked, declaring the newspapers were preaching on that text admirably, some of the damned scoundrels, he added, being well paid for it.

"Now, the fact is, Cameron, a few of us have been looking into this question as business men since that fight in Manila Bay. Dewey simply brushed that Spanish fleet aside with the back of his hand, and the business men of this country are not going to throw his winnings to the dogs. I understand there are more good railway schemes there than you can count, so with a steamship line or two we can keep a few good fellows busy. This war to free those Cubans is costing the country a barrel of money. We have got to get it back."

However, the Senator had scarcely repeated to me some remarks he had made in the Senate that afternoon than I perceived he was under the impression the Philippines were situated in the immediate neighbourhood of Hawaii, and, in fact, a portion of that archipelago. How he had fallen into such an error I did not know, but I hastened to tell him they were several thousand miles apart.

"Damn me!" cried he, not a little irritated. "Why don't you keep me informed about this sort of thing, Cameron? I haven't the time to find islands, when they're digging a new one out of the sea every day since this war began. I understand the volcanoes make a new one every twenty-four hours. I can't keep up with their output."

He was pacified, though, by the reflection that people would be more ready to annex them if nobody knew

where they were, and that hardly a member of either house was better informed than himself.

"Now, Cameron," he concluded, "you've been a good boy, and, if we annex those islands and the scheme I have in mind is put in motion, I think I'll give you a chance to make some money."

Not displeased with this, I made it a point, when I delivered the Senator's papers next morning to the President, to mention the Philippines and the contending arguments respecting our keeping them, which subject immediately threw the great man into his most oracular and sententious style.

"We have a great duty to perform, Mr. Cameron," said he.

"We have, indeed, Your Excellency."

"A nation, no less than an individual, must be true to itself."

"True, Mr. President. You have in mind, I suppose, that part of our people who think that in this question charity begins at home."

"Exactly," he replied. "This nation has a great duty, in fact, I may say, a profound obligation, to follow its manifest destiny. Our people must not be too prone to run after false idols."

From this I saw that he felt the majority were now inclining to give up the islands and to avoid the strain on our Constitution.

"Quite true, your Excellency," I replied, "which makes me wonder at the great turn of public sentiment the last ten days. Every mail brings us another newspaper in favor of annexation. A great and rapid change."

"Yes, yes," the President replied. "And what does

Senator Baxom appear to think about it?"

"He is deeply impressed with our obligation to mankind."

"The Senator is a man of rare judgment, Mr. Cameron." He then paused a moment and added: "Yes, my son, as I said before, this nation is under a profound obligation to follow its manifest destiny. And what destiny was ever more manifestly ours than that of imparting our beneficent laws and policy to suffering races thrown by divine Providence at our feet? Can we be true to ourselves if we are not true to others? No, no."

This humour of his I increased by quoting from several journals, which, I was sure, he deemed important, until the good man believed an avalanche was impending. He even picked up and hastily scanned some newspapers that had been lying unopened on one of his tables, journals which some undesigning secretary had left in a handy place, and from these he saw enough at a glance to confirm my intimations.

"Senator Baxom is right, as usual," he added, as I left him. "It has pleased divine Providence to point out the extension of our justice, mercy, and civilisation."

CHAPTER LXXVII

MY RETURN TO WEALTH

I NOW felt that I had two strings to my bow, the lawsuit and the Philippines, for, as to the latter, whatever may have been the easy quality of the Senator in his relations to the public, he was to his friends as good as his word. I was now suddenly advised that I had a third. It was a telegram from Canby, signed in an assumed name, concerning the Dolly, a message that I had to read several times to believe: "Come here right now. We have struck the richest ore in the State."

Before this I had paid little attention to this venture, which, in truth, I had, since I had made it, begun to believe was as foolish as it was small. Canby, after the fashion in the West, had incorporated "The Dolly Consolidated Mining and Reduction Company," with a capital of one million dollars, of which one-fourth had gone to me, but which I had been regarding as so much waste-paper. Of his own three-fourths he had sold about half to others for small sums and the proceeds he had lent to the company, or, one might say, to ourselves, in order further to develop the mine. It was on this little fund that the sanguine fellow had sunk the shaft deeper.

Determined not to be carried off my feet by this en-

thusiasm of his, I answered that national affairs were taking all my time, so that I must not leave Washington unless there was no doubt of the discovery. This drew from him a second telegram more positive than the first. In consequence, I consulted the Senator, who, after swearing that a mine was no better than a rat-hole, on which I had best waste no time and less money, admitted I ought to satisfy myself by going to Colorado at once.

Within two days, accordingly, I met Canby in Denver, repaired to Conger City and the Dolly, gravely explored the little tunnel and examined the fragments of ore. As for Canby, he could scarcely conceal his excitement, until finally, by the reports of the assayers, I began myself to believe we had something quite unusual.

The chief reason for my coming to Colorado was to get back into our hands as much of the stock as we could before our good luck should become public. Those who had bought it from Canby not having in all cases kept it, the latter felt it fair we should get it back from their transferees. This we must do quickly, yet without such impatience as might arouse suspicion.

A few cents a share was all that was asked, so I had no difficulty in acquiring a great deal with a hundred dollars, Canby himself having no money to buy any at all. The buying was itself no small exertion of craft, for in a mining camp rumour is quick. However, I got all I could afford to buy, and, seeing there was some left that ought not to be missed, I sought my friend Gregory in Denver.

"Let me beg you, Gregory," I said, "to get what you can of Dolly at once. Buy it, for God's sake!"

On this recommendation he gaily spent three hundred dollars in acquiring shares at about the same rate as I had.

All this was none too soon, for within the fifth day the news came that in a mine adjoining the Dolly a rich discovery had been made and that the owners were in vain attempting to conceal it until they should buy the floating stock. This mine being much more developed than our own, such a discovery appeared to mean a great deal. Its shares shot up in value like a rocket. At the same time it was speedily remembered that the owners of the Dolly had been quietly buying its scattered shares also, so in a single night our values multiplied tenfold.

During the next two weeks I lived in great excitement, for, if I chose to sell, I was clearly rich again. A little I did sell, receiving ten thousand dollars, and gladly sent to Olcott a few thousand that I owed him. As for Washington and the Senator, I was reluctantly though generously excused by the old fellow from returning. Indeed, he telegraphed me to stay, and congratulated me heartily, only adding that he thought I had made winnings enough already to leave the table.

In Denver I was now pointed out as a remarkably shrewd young mining man, a wonderfully clever fellow from the East, who knew a good thing when he saw it, in a way unusual in the brainless foplings of the East. I felt I was a *strong* man.

"Gregory," said I, one day, "it does me good to think I tipped you the wink in this thing at the right time, and I wish to add that, if you feel now, old man, that you've made enough, I stand ready to buy every share you have at the present market rates. Don't mis-

understand me, now. I want you to keep these shares, every one of them, but this is your time to make a hundred to one, if you wish it."

"No, sir," replied Gregory, "not on your life. I'm satisfied, Cameron, perfectly satisfied. In fact, I'd be little less than a pig if I were not. Thank you for the offer. I appreciate it, but my best judgment is to keep Dolly for the present. A great little property, Cameron."

While we were talking another named Godfrey joined us. This Godfrey having also bought some shares at my suggestion, when they were exceedingly cheap, was feeling so happy over the multiplication of his profits that, when I repeated to him this offer of mine, he declined it with ungrateful suspicion.

"Of course, I know that you people," said he, "you large holders, want to gather that stock, but, thank you, no. I fancy I know its value as well as the rest of you."

At this unfair talk I was disposed to be impatient, but Gregory quieted the tone of things by setting me entirely right in the eyes of Godfrey.

"All I meant, Mr. Godfrey," said I, "was this: that, as mining stocks have their downs as well as their ups, I felt I ought to give the opportunity now for a great profit to anybody I had induced to join us."

"Never mind the downs, as you call them, Mr. Cameron," he replied. "I don't take fright so easily. I know a good thing well enough to keep it through a change of weather."

It so fell out that the very next day Canby and myself, feeling that we had properly taken care of all our friends, who had had abundant chance to get rich on

Dolly shares, resolved to play a little game by no means uncommon in mines. Determined to get more shares before the price became altogether excessive, we stopped work in the mine entirely, affected a somewhat different countenance, and even whispered to a broker that a few shares could be had from us under the current rate. The effect of this was gradually felt. People became suspicious. Some declared it was a mere play, others that we were trying to make it appear that it was only a play.

In the midst of this both Gregory and Godfrey came to me in some concern.

"What's the matter, Cameron?" they inquired. "Why is this stock sinking?"

"I tell you both here, in strict confidence, that there is nothing whatever wrong with the Dolly."

"What do you mean by in confidence, if there's nothing wrong with the mine?"

"To be strictly confidential, now, I mean this to both of you in the utmost secrecy," I replied. "Neither Canby nor myself are sorry to see the shares go down. Don't ask me more and don't sell now—that's all I have to say. Don't sell until I tell you."

With this they appeared well enough satisfied, and some time passed, during which the stock fell still further, Canby and myself sinking it by offering, with seeming secrecy, such small portions as owners might who were afraid of getting rid of a bad stock too fast. Finally, the shares suffering one day a decided fall, we reversed our actions by beginning to buy with much vigour, in consequence of which, by the time we had all we wanted, the price bounded up again.

Gregory and Godfrey being now in partnership as

mining brokers, I sauntered into their office that evening in the best of humour to congratulate them.

"Didn't I tell you!" I exclaimed, with a smile. "I'm glad you fellows had faith in me."

"I suppose you're referring to Dolly," replied Godfrey, coldly.

"Exactly," I answered. "You see how it stands to-day. I suppose you don't want to sell now."

"I confess, Cameron," responded Gregory, "that I feel somewhat disappointed with you concerning this stock. Its last freak is more provoking than the others."

"I should say so," added Godfrey, insolently. "Why didn't you tell us it was going up?"

"I warned you long ago it was only a temporary fall," I replied, supposing they were grieved merely in not having bought more themselves while the price was low.

"That's all very well," retorted Godfrey, "but you were pretty smooth. Why weren't you frank and open? We've sold our stock and you've probably got it in your pocket now."

"What's that?" I exclaimed. "Do you mean you paid no attention to what I said, but sold?"

"We paid attention, Cameron," answered Gregory, "to what you did and not what you said. When we saw you selling——"

"We thought it high time for a reputable firm like ours," interrupted Godfrey, "to wash its hands of such securities entirely."

Disgusted that I had been so little trusted by those I had tried to oblige, I nevertheless added:

"At any rate, gentlemen, the price when you sold was

several times what you paid for it. I made you money, didn't I?"

"Oh, that sounds well," sneered Godfrey. "We've made a trifle, we admit, but we feel, just the same, that you put your hand into our pockets. Good evening, Mr. Cameron. We're very much obliged."

"But I made you money, even though you didn't trust me," I exclaimed. "It's your own fault that you didn't make more."

"Oh, yes, we made money in the thing," he replied, "but we would have made more if we could have trusted you."

CHAPTER LXXVIII

IN THE COURTS

DURING the next two weeks I was called to New York to the trial of my case. Reputed to be rich in my mine, I again appeared a gentleman. Friends remembered me who had always been looking in another direction during my depression, and I was invited into their automobiles that I might be diverted with the antics of those who are nearly run down on foot. But the old folly of prosperity did not return to me. I was surprised to find that I now felt no finer than those who had little.

As for Betty, I contrived to see the faithful girl every day, but under circumstances unpleasant to us both, for my pride would not permit me to enter her parents' house, and, while we could meet at the houses of others without deception, the situation was not free.

"Let it be settled now, Betty, that if this case goes against me, I shall sell all my shares in the Dolly and we shall marry at once. I don't wish to sell them now, for they are going higher, but if I must, I must."

Then Betty would assure me the Dolly must be a grand mine. She longed to see it. What judgment I had, to perceive the future of a hole in the ground!

At last arrived the day of the trial. How shall I, unused to legal terms, attempt to describe those pro-

ceedings in which the law conceals its operations from the vulgar? The statements of counsel, the motions, objections, and exceptions gave a mysterious gravity to it all. I felt that every utterance of my own lawyers had point and spirit, while the counsel for the will seemed to me such a set of triflers that I was astonished whenever the judge appeared to give any weight to what they let fall.

The proceedings being in chancery, as it is called, we were free from a jury, which, my lawyers assured me, would not have been friendly to our side, so I attached deserved importance to every nod of the judge's head; nor could I see why the law forbade my getting up myself upon occasion, to explain to him what I deemed myself particularly able to make clear. Nothing, though, I was advised, can more shock a magistrate, when he has to decide a cause, than to hear suggestions in aid of his understanding from the one who has the matter most in mind.

However, it was a short story. During the first day, the judge ruling in our favour on nearly every point, we were jubilant; nor did my counsel fail to intimate that I had not underrated their influence with his Honour. The next day, though, he took a different turn, laid by my lawyers to his displeasure at a bailiff who failed to air the room, and where he had at first viewed suspiciously everything in favour of the will, he now plainly intimated a duty to let things remain as he found them. Accordingly, we laboured in vain to set the testament aside. Even the plain perjuries of Maud Start and the stammering, half-incoherent testimony of the servants, who rarely agreed with each other, as well as the opinions of experts, who, while not

unanimous, were for the most part of the belief that the signature was a forgery, were not sufficient to satisfy the judge. Almost testily at the close of the case he pronounced his decision, upholding the will with its many gifts to charity, liberality to the servants, and comparative pittance to me.

During all this trial Olcott was at no time absent from my side. With great loss to his own affairs, at that very time running badly against him, the faithful fellow sturdily devoted himself to my cause, an example of friendship, indeed; nor was my own chagrin at the result more keen than his own.

"This girl, Start, is a liar from first to last," he said with deliberate resolution, "and I am not finished with her yet."

Even when I assured him I was willing to drop the whole business, he would not desist.

"That fortune," he insisted, "is yours, Cameron. We shall appeal. First, we shall fight for a new trial on some ground or other. Leave it all to me."

With him in all this resolution was that lovable wife of his, who, with her love for Betty, was doubly useful to me in my troubles.

For my part, persuaded of my fortune in the Dolly, I bore with some composure the loss of my inheritance. Determined to appeal and otherwise to hold the case in the courts, even though the lawyers should devour all, I nevertheless ceased to reckon on the estate. Betty and I should now marry. I should sell my shares of Dolly at once, demand her hand of her parents, and then make her my wife whether they agreed to it or not.

CHAPTER LXXIX

STILL ANOTHER LOSS

TELEGRAPHING to Canby the loss of my lawsuit, I advised him also of my desire to sell at least half of my stock in the Dolly immediately, the reasons for which I had already given him in a letter before the trial. Without waiting for a reply, I forthwith, to please Betty as a final effort, sought old Sinclair, who, though he had given up business, still retained an office in Nassau Street. He received me sourly, not even affecting past hypocrisy.

"Mr. Cameron," said he, as soon as I had declared my errand, "you are very frank to advise me of your losing your lawsuit, when it can be no secret to any one who reads the newspapers. As for your hopes from this mine of yours, it is probably a phantom like the inheritance. So far as I am concerned, it makes no difference what your expectations may be, good or bad, you shall not have my consent, sir, nor my wife's, to marrying my daughter. You understand?"

With that he bowed me out, as the saying is, I being beside myself with vexation at his contempt, which was still stinging me when I arrived at the office of Olcott. This was the place where I received all my communications. Hardly had I entered the door when a telegram was handed me which, indeed, banished the sen-

sations of contumely. It was from Canby, who, to my despair, informed me the Dolly had that afternoon been placed in the hands of a receiver at the suit of Godfrey. The latter had gotten a few shares for this purpose, had roused some minority shareholders, had sought a country judge, and, without notice whatever, had placed the property in the hands of an unscrupulous receiver.

That my shares were for the present, possibly forever, worthless was now clear. I resolved at once to hurry to Colorado. Packing my trunk, I received a telephone call from Lillian, whom I had not sought since the trial, and who now begged me in the most excited tones to hurry to her rooms, adding—what surprised me still more—that I fetch Olcott also without fail. We were there in half an hour, Olcott utterly ignorant still of the second will and only knowing that Lillian and I were friends.

"My God!" she cried as she opened the door. "That will is gone, stolen, stolen, Charles."

"What will do you mean, Miss Evanson?" asked the nonplussed Olcott, while I stood aside bewildered.

"Oh, I'll tell you everything, everything," answered poor Lillian. "Sit down, sit down. It's that Lizette, Charles. Connors has succeeded in getting around her. She left me for a vacation ten days ago—a vacation, she said."

"What the deuce does all this mean—Connors?" demanded Olcott.

"Listen to it all, all," she replied, trying to compose herself, until we understood that, having determined to deliver to me in Olcott's presence (lest I impulsively should destroy it) the second will, she had opened the drawer in her little safe, only to find it gone. Lizette

alone had the other key to that compartment, and the girl, of whose recent actions a dozen odd circumstances now were recalled, had been bribed beyond fidelity, it seemed clear, by Conners. Not a trace of her had Lillian been able to get, though half a dozen persons were seeking her by telephone at the address she had left behind.

It was an hour before we quieted Lillian, whose agitation was more at my loss, if the will was destroyed, than at fears of her own humiliation should the document be brought to light; nor was Olcott in a very good humour with me when we left the house, swearing that he had never heard of a more extraordinary affair in his life. As for my own thoughts, I now realised that I was penniless indeed.

"Oh, you dear man," exclaimed Lillian as we left her, "I've ruined you, after all."

As we passed out of the building, Olcott said:

"I don't know what to make of her story. I'm half inclined to suspect she let the maid run away—an easy loophole, you see, to get rid of the will without appearing to do injustice to you and——"

"Oh, shame, Olcott," I exclaimed. "Surely a woman who thinks enough of her good name to throw away two hundred thousand rather than be humiliated can be true to——"

"Yes, I suppose you're right. At all events, Cameron, you know her best, so your opinion governs. But, hang it, even if we recover this second will, there'll be a fight to establish it. These scoundrels having proved their own will, can get all the funds they need to fight ours as fraudulent, forged, or made under undue influence."

"There's only one comfort in this last affair," I added; "even if the second is now destroyed, this bold performance, with Lizette dragged into it, is a crime easily run down and will give us a hold upon the original gang. Conners, you see, will be in immediate trouble."

CHAPTER LXXX

COLORADO COURTS

THERE was, it seemed plain, only one thing to do, to hasten to Colorado. After a parting word with Betty, I caught an express late that night, nor did I sleep many hours on the way, so maddened was I by the accumulation of reverses.

Canby meeting me at the train, I was soon possessed of the whole story, and was glad to know that he had employed the best counsel to set aside the receivership. By this time, however, there had intervened the company's creditors, not numerous, to be sure, but sufficient to complicate the case.

Our counsel pressed their motion to vacate, and an immediate hearing, to our joy, was granted. Then the court admitted it had exceeded its jurisdiction in granting a receivership without notice. We were pleased. The court went further. It would at once vacate the appointment. We were delighted.

"This judge is clear. This judge knows the law," remarked the happy Canby.

"However," added his Honour, "the parties being now all before me, after notice to each other, I have to-day jurisdiction to do what is proper. The appointment of Mr. Barnaby is, as I say, vacated, for this court must always admit itself in error when error is pointed out."

"Ain't he clear, that judge!" exclaimed Canby.

"That being done, though," continued the court, "and jurisdiction existing, as I said, to-day by reason of the presence of both parties, I now, considering that circumstances justify a receivership of this property, place the Dolly Consolidated Mining and Reduction Company in the hands of a receiver, and appoint Mr. Charles Barnaby to that place."

We could scarcely believe our ears, but our counsel, determined to save his face, arose with great dignity to take exception.

"I may add, your Honour," said he, "that, of course, we shall recover our costs against plaintiff Godfrey for error in the first receivership."

"Quite right," replied the judge, as one who was doing him a great favour; "costs against the plaintiff, you understand. Mr. Clerk, costs against the plaintiff."

I had hardly time to curse the costs to myself, when counsel for the receiver (of course, in the interest of Godfrey) arose with much sense of duty to assure the court that, as the motion to vacate had been made in the name of the company, the costs would belong to the company, and, as counsel for its receiver, he would consider these an asset, no bone, apparently, being too small for this dog to pick. He would, therefore, himself collect the costs. Though it was clear this detestable sum would not exceed twenty-five dollars, the lawyers on all sides fell to wrangling over it, as if it were the mine itself, until Canby and myself withdrew in disgust.

"What's this country coming to, with judges like that!" exclaimed Canby, with an oath, as he quitted the room.

It was now undeniable that we were in a bad situation. Remedy we had none except by appeal, a dubious and tardy relief, since meanwhile the property would be ruined and the shares become worthless.

The first question now was whether there was any honesty in the receiver himself. Canby declared he would not trust that man as far as a frog could jump, and such was the opinion of our lawyers.

We at length consulted the receiver, who lied to us, as we could see, from the start. Within five days he stopped all work on the mine, and within five more, to our intense humiliation, a suit was begun against the Dolly by the owner of an adjoining mine, who claimed that the vein we had been working was a mere extension of his, a property known as the Justice, and that, though within our lines, it was subject to his pursuit. Knowing enough of mining litigation, we saw that the receiver's seeming distress at this suit was not so deep as it appeared. Our property, beyond a question, was to be hacked to pieces by collusion, and we were to be robbed by the Justice company.

Our shares fell now to a song, and, though we were not forced to sell them, they were of no market value. Whether they would not be entirely annihilated by loss of the vein, or by a sale for the receiver's debts, was the serious stage next to be confronted.

In the worst spirits imaginable I again returned to New York. On the way I stopped at Washington, as the Philippines were now ceded to the United States. Here, too, I received disappointment. The Senator had grown cautious about the exploration scheme.

"The fact is, Cameron," said he, "some of these fools lost their heads about the opportunities in the islands

and began to ask too much. We had a neat little railway project all ready in a quiet and proper manner, had bought a number of old titles there for a song and were going to have Congress ratify them. It was Gway's scheme—a fertile fellow, that. Now that damned Boston syndicate grew hoggish in the same line, and that has started all this newspaper talk. A committee of inquiry will probably be appointed. I'm done with the thing. I don't think it's right to meddle with these things after the people appear disturbed about them. It's not the right thing to do."

While I was not afraid that the Senator would ever become *infected* with concern for the public welfare, as Madame de Motteville expresses it, I appreciated his caution, though with increasing discontent, as I saw myself again reduced to seek employment.

One pleasure I had just at this juncture, small but vindictive. While I was talking to the Senator, something reminded him of a telegram received by him that day from Godfrey, whom he had known some years. This telegram read as follows :

"Have organised scheme in which the return of every dollar invested is absolutely certain in thirty days. Absolutely certain. Don't fail to join us. Great secret. Trust me. How much shall I reserve for you and draw for?"

"That sounds well," said the Senator. "If he'll get it all back in thirty days, why is he telegraphing around the country for subscribers?"

"The cursed scamp!" I added. "I hope you're not going to help him."

Hardly," he responded, as he fell to writing a reply, which he soon showed me: "Draw on me for my proportion thirty-one days after sight."

We fell to laughing at this ingenious answer, which, moreover, was sent with charges to be collected of Godfrey, and when it was dispatched the Senator remarked:

"I knew that fellow Godfrey's father before him in Illinois. We had adjoining lots in the early days of Springfield on a street that had a business future. I held the corner lot and thought he might sell his to me, but the old devil insisted on my selling to him, and, when he saw I never would, he ruined my lot and the whole neighbourhood, besides, by selling his to some congregation or other that built a church on every inch of it. Churches ruin streets, ruin them."

The Senator, after a pause, commented further on the Godfreys:

"I knew his mother, too, when she told her lawyer to be sure to get her divorce by noon, as she had to be at a luncheon at one. Business-like! Now she's married a fortune, she snubs the other women in Chicago because her husband kills more pigs a year than the rest of them."

As for Betty, poor girl, ready to live with me even in a cot, she still agreed it would do neither of us credit to marry without a penny. Some turn of affairs must be awaited.

To debate the course we should take, a final conference was had at the Olcotts in a small parlor, where, with arms about each other, we could discuss that simplicity of life in which with the utmost happiness we could live and love upon nothing.

CHAPTER LXXXI

A VERY PAINFUL SCENE

NEVER shall I forget that day, for hardly had we begun our talk, hardly had we settled into the complete peace of a domestic future, when there occurred an interruption momentous and extraordinary. A rustle of skirts outside, suppressed, excited words, a quiet rapping at the door, and, before we had time to turn the knob, there rushed in Lillian, leading Lizette and some man I had never seen before. The maid was in tears, white and terrified; the mistress nervous, but not less beautiful than ever in the lofty animation of her eyes.

"I tried to find you at your office, Mr. Olcott," she said, not even stopping to notice our two women, who, unaware of all this matter of a second will, were gazing at her as a pair of pretty, round-eyed quail might regard a bird of paradise.

"Here is Lizette," she continued, breaking the hush that followed her first words. "No, you must not scold her. She has suffered enough. I have brought with me this gentleman, a notary."

Still we hardly knew how to speak, for we saw that unusual things were about to follow, Olcott, however, murmuring an introduction to the ladies, the ceremony of which nobody had time to observe.

"And here is the will," she added, handing it to Olcott. "Read it at once, aloud, please, in my presence. I am tired of this uncert——"

"Tear the infernal thing in pieces!" I exclaimed.

"Never!" she cried. "Read it, Mr. Olcott."

"There is just a possibility, Miss Evanson," he replied, "that this may become unnecessary. Connors is certainly in difficulties now by reason of this affair."

"Read the will, I say," repeated Lillian.

"Ah, my poor mistress," the maid sobbed. "That bad Connors he make me take it, I love him so; but first I read it myself, and when I see what it say about my mistress, that big lie, I would not give it up for fear some people they make her give up money all her life or print it."

"Never mind, Lizette. Poor child," said Lillian.

"And then he struck me here, right here on the head, the first day we together, and I run away from him. I keep this thing. I not tear it up. It is no crime, is it, what I do?"

"Keep cool, Lizette," I said. "Now, suppose we have a talk about all this later. You keep the papers, Olcott, if Miss Lillian insists, until——"

"No! He'll read it now, or I'll state its contents to these ladies. I'm going to put this paper into so many memories that there'll be no further object in your concealing it. You've been kind, gentlemen, very, very kind to me, in keeping it, as I see, a secret from these young women, but they must know it now, and all I have to say is that what it says about me is a cruel, wicked lie."

With this poor Lillian, who had thus far remained

standing, sank into a chair, her voice in deeper emotion than was ever exhibited on any stage.

There was another pause in silence.

"You insist on this?" asked Olcott.

"Absolutely," she replied. "Nor will I leave this room voluntarily until it is done. Go on."

In vain did I expostulate. The will was read to the wondering little women and the notary.

"The base old man," cried Betty. "He lied about you," and upon that she flung her arms around Lillian's neck. "Nobody will believe a word of it."

But the woman of the world knew better, and, as she rose slowly to her feet with that expression which comes upon a face when one has to take up a long, hard burden, she shook her head and answered:

"Dear child, while you're not much younger than I, you don't know yet this cruel world. Believe it, the world? Of course it will. It likes to believe such things. Condemn an actress! It's too easy a chance to be lost."

Never had I heard a bitter tone in Lillian's voice before.

"But you have us dear friends, don't you see?" Betty exclaimed.

"Friends!" cried Lillian. "Ah, you don't know what you say, dear, sweet, little woman! The world of fashion won't let Charles Cameron's wife be friend of mine. You'll try it, I know. You'll try it, but the world will break your efforts."

Here the tears began to run down her lovely cheeks, while, in a sudden burst of feeling, she caught Betty in her arms to kiss her.

"No, no. The good mothers will be against me, too.

They can't understand it all, and I suppose they'd better not. I'm paying the hard price of beauty behind the footlights, and maybe I've been at fault, besides—but not that—no, not what that bad old man declared. I swear it, dear women, I swear it! Good-bye. I've got to give you all up. Good-bye."

But the worst was yet to occur, a climax never to be forgotten by any of us. Her father entered. It was just as she was leaving the room in her agony, for the old man, as it subsequently transpired, having by chance called at her rooms, found there such a state of excitement in her two other servants as caused him to get from them some inklings they had of where she had gone, hints easily picked up from her impatient search for Olcott and me over the telephone after Lizette's return.

"Lily, my dear Lillian, what is wrong?" he asked on the threshold, as she herself was running out.

It was a terrible thing to see. She stood stone still a moment, then sank against the wall, whither, for a moment, none of us had mind enough left to run to her support. It was the old man himself who caught her.

"Don't you know me, child?" he said, as he led her to a chair, the blood now coming back to her face until it was crimson, while she made to us some foolish gesture invoking secrecy. Nobody had yet replied.

"I—I beg your pardon, ladies and gentlemen," he resumed. "My daughter here—I'll have to ask you, suh, whether the document in your hands has any connection with my daughter?" for he could not help seeing that her eyes were intently on it and that Olcott, who had it in his hands, was getting it out of sight in an awkward fashion.

"It is nothing, sir, nothing," responded Olcott.

But the old man was already at his side, where, placing his hand on Olcott's shoulder, he added firmly :

"I beg your pardon, suh, but I'll have to insist on your letting me see that paper."

"Oh, father," moaned Lillian.

I think, had we had any self-possession, we might even then have put him off, but we were all helpless from surprise and wrought-up feelings. As it was, Olcott hesitating, the old fellow took it abruptly in his own hands, when in a deathly silence he glanced first at the top and then at the signature.

"A will! Mr. George Cameron? I really don't see what connection—— Ah, your name in it, Lily—what's this?—God!—what's this?"

"It's a lie, father, a lie," cried Lillian, as she sank at his feet and clasped his knees, then dissolving into tears, conscious of innocence, yet conscious of that degree of guilt which in his eyes would have been too much.

It was an awful sight to behold the old man's face, in which mingled, while astonishment wore off, unutterable resentment towards the carcass that had maligned her. As may be supposed, he could not, for some moments, say anything at all.

"I'll tear him from his grave. I'll tear his soul from hell. I beg your pardon, ladies. I'm an old man, as you see. Why, curse him! Where is he? Get up, Lily, girl. Come, come with me. I'll find him. Is he in town? Come, come."

Well, they left us, that is all I can remember; nor could we four speak a word to each other for a time,

remembering only that face, that voice, that mind so nearly gone.

In a little while we betook ourselves, all of us, to Lillian's apartments, where we found her prostrated with emotion. The father we traced in a half-mad pursuit he had of something, and after a day we were able to reduce him to calmness, a condition soon imposed by his own exhaustion. At the end of three days Lillian, deadly pale and at his side, was still unable to resume her play.

CHAPTER LXXXII

WHICH ENDS THIS HISTORY

THE events of the next three days were swift, for Conners, on so easy a clue as Lizette could furnish, was speedily caught by the heels, and, being in terror because of the charges now preferring against him, he made no resistance to see whether they could be maintained, but, conscious generally of guilt, acknowledged a participation in fraud with Sanderson, Maud Start and Maria Dole.

The signature to the first will was genuine. That much was sound; but the interior sheets had been changed, being only in typewriting, and totally different provisions cunningly inserted, a work of patience invented by Sanderson. The latter had conceived the design abroad, when, falling in with Maud, he had heard her recount the old man's affairs and the tempting millions. With a scheme well hatched, they had returned, had conspired with Maria, and had been obliged to deal with Conners, who had let them know of his having witnessed some later paper just before my uncle's death.

The devisees, other than Maria and Maud, were ignorant of the fraud, and the servants named in the altered document were mentioned, some of them, by way of peace, and others because their names were upon

the unaltered concluding pages. All, naturally, had been useful to each other as witnesses at the trial in establishing the signatures and in supporting the probability of the bequests by extraneous circumstances. As for me, I never had been recognised in the original beyond the seventy-five thousand dollars.

The capitulation of Conners involved in a trice the confession of the others, and it was agreed by opposing counsel that no opposition would be made to our setting the decision aside and to our establishing the later will. Papers were speedily drawn to that effect, and, as I left the lawyers, I telephoned Betty to meet me at the Olcotts', which she did.

"We shall be married at once, father or no father," I cried, "and it shall be at my home, Betty, out of town, at the Aikens'."

The blushing Betty agreeing to this, I hurried that afternoon to my old home, throwing the good couple into a bustle by such intelligence. When Betty, with Mrs. Olcott, arrived the next day, a plentiful breakfast awaited her, though, as may be imagined, she was in no state of mind to care anything about it or to eat more than a mouthful. The sweet old housewife embraced and blessed my little partner between excursions to the kitchen, where two plump young pigeons were roasting for us.

"I'm afraid," she exclaimed, "I ought to have cooked them a bit longer, the poor little birds. I'm afraid I didn't make it quite hot enough for them, the dear things."

Thus it was that on that bright morning in May Betty and I were married, it being my good fortune to unite myself with virtue, innocence and beauty on

the same spot on which I had passed my childhood. During several days we lingered in this rural scene, where the blossoms afforded fragrance with a little shade at noon. Together we visited my old walks, together mused by the lazy stream. As for the fortune, we troubled ourselves for the time about no such vulgar care, for a trifling hope makes lovers rich.

Nor was there need of worry. Though old Sinclair vented his wrath in letters and telegrams, he was not long in relenting after a new and successful trial adjudged me the heir. Until that time Betty and I lived frugally in a suburban cottage, lauding with vows and sighs and kisses the pleasures of temporary poverty and simple fare. It was a pretty little house, which love made comfortable and good taste enriched, nor did ever palace appear finer to its owner. In the morning the bustling Betty hastened to see how the lighted windows would look from without, running out of doors at dusk to see the glow behind the curtains, and at night longing to see the garden sparkle in the morning dew.

In the midst of our happiness we were visited by the Senator and his wife, both of whom vowed there never had been a more natural union than ours.

"This is a most auspicious beginning, Senator," remarked Mr. Aiken; "this will be a happy couple, indeed."

"I should think they would," replied the man of the world, "being so young and having all the money they need."

"Fortune is not to be despised," quoth the good man, "but they have better yet, a wealth of love."

"Not so bad, not so bad," the statesman answered.

"I'm not ashamed to admit that when I ran away with Mrs. Baxom I would rather have had her than all the money old John Rockefeller has stowed away."

"Besides which, Charles begins life with admirable principles," continued the parson.

"Finest in the world, the finest in the world," exclaimed Baxom, "though, I'm glad to feel, the boy's recent experiences have probably taught him how to give some people as good as he receives."

"Quite right; I hope so, too, with all my heart," sighed Aiken, "for we must do unto others as we would have them do unto us."

"The golden rule, I believe," Baxom responded; "and for my part, Mr. Aiken, I have always done even better than that, as I have been in the habit of looking ahead a bit in dealing with a good many prominent people and of doing unto them beforehand what I think, if they get the chance, they are going to do unto me, a modern improvement upon the old rule, as I hear people quoting it lately from some book or other, and, at any rate, one that a number of us public men at Washington believe is the only true rule to follow."

"Glorious precept!" exclaimed honest Aiken. "Thank God we have such men as you at the head of our country's affairs!"

Then the Baxoms and we Camerons returned to the city in the Senator's private car. The jolliest party imaginable, we finished a dinner with champagne just as the train paused at an uptown station.

"That's the finest steak I ever ate," said the Senator, just as the ladies had left the table to put on their cloaks; "but what's the matter, boy, why——"

He began to follow my looks out of the window to

a billboard, while the trembling glass shook the wine upon my coat.

"Extra! Lillian Evanson found dead in bed! Suicide probable."

He looked at my pale face, tried to say something, bit the end of a cigar, burnt his fingers with a match, pretended it was a bit of tobacco that made him cough, finally crunched the Havana in the corner of his mouth, and slowly said:

"Cameron, I think there's one more angel in the land above."

THE END



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